

# THE PRESENCE OF OTHER WORLDS

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL /  
SPIRITUAL FINDINGS  
OF EMANUEL SWEDENBORG

**Wilson Van Dusen**

Foreword by Raymond Moody



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*To my*  
Paternal Grandmother,  
a spiritualist minister

When I was a boy, I remember my grandmother waving her hand over a set of twelve, red volumes and saying, “This is all you need to know.” She did not give me anything to identify them. Although she willed the set to me when she died, my parents threw them out—to protect me from such things. Many decades later, when I saw the same set of volumes in a library, my hair stood on end. I had found the books: B. F. Barrett’s twelve-volume *Swedenborg Library* (1875–1881), a collection of aptly selected quotations under subject headings. By that time, I was already an advanced student of Swedenborg.

Yes, grandmother, I agree with you. It is pretty much all one needs to know.

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# FOREWORD

*By Raymond Moody*

Who was Emanuel Swedenborg? What do his works tell us about the power of love, the nature of altered states of consciousness, and the prospect of life after death? And how can one learn more about this amazing man?

At first, it may seem hard to believe, yet it becomes evident on close consideration that this brilliant eighteenth-century Swedish scientist and visionary pinpointed the core concerns of twenty-first century spirituality. Swedenborg's works are a treasure trove of enlightenment for anyone on a spiritual path. He was no simplistic New-Age guru, however. His works require concentrated study, which is well worth the effort. Wilson Van Dusen's *The Presence of Other Worlds* is an excellent introduction to Swedenborg's works, especially for readers with an interest in psychology and a mystical turn of mind.

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) spent the first part of his life absorbing the scientific knowledge of that age and mastering a repertoire of technical trades as well. An accomplished thinker in physics, chemistry, mathematics, and astronomy, he made major contributions to anatomy and the neurosciences. He was a metallurgist and is credited with founding the science of crystallography. He also directed a project that moved ships over fourteen miles of mountains and valleys. He designed stoves, an ear trumpet, pumps and fire extinguishers, and a flying machine. The list goes on and on.

His primary occupation was that of mining engineer and inspector of mines. It is somehow natural that a man comfortable with plumbing the depths of the earth would conceive a desire to plumb the depths of the inner world too. So, in the early 1740s, Swedenborg turned his vast intellect to questions surrounding the human soul. He traveled far and wide in what became a disciplined spiritual journey of several decades. It began with

dream-journaling and self-exploration of the hypnogogic state of consciousness that is said to be between sleeping and waking or on the threshold of sleep. He had out-of-body experiences and found that he could see and converse with spirits. He astounded others with apparent episodes of clairvoyance and an uncanny ability to foresee events just as they later happened.

Eventually Swedenborg was granted the ability to walk in heaven and hell while still alive—and functioning well!—on earth. He scrupulously documented his observations during the otherworldly voyages and produced a virtual atlas and travelers' guidebook of the other side. Many of the details of his reports check out quite well with today's familiar accounts of out-of-body trips and near-death experiences. Swedenborg wrote that a couple of times he was allowed to see what dying is like by going through the process himself. According to his accounts, angels guided him out of his body and into other realms of existence, a fairly common way that people with near-death experiences express what happened to them. Like Swedenborg, they talk about the ineffability of what they went through, experiences that are indescribable or beyond the capacity of earthly language. And, like those with profound near-death experiences, Swedenborg found that love is the ultimate reigning power and principle of life in the world beyond.

Swedenborg's wide-ranging versatility as a spiritual seeker and visionary explains part of his broad and enduring appeal. After all, many human beings have vivid, memorable dreams, hypnogogic experiences, episodes of leaving the body, or experiences of entering the spirit world during close encounters with death. Moreover, many people have had strange and vivid visions of events that later came to pass, and many have had the uncanny experience of just suddenly knowing that something important was going on at that moment elsewhere, but without any of the existing lines of communication or ways of knowing being open.

Someone on a serious path of spirituality and self-knowledge would know of at least one or two of the above from direct personal experience. However, it would be extremely unlikely that any one person would have direct knowledge of this full array of extraordinary states of consciousness. Furthermore, few of us have devoted countless hours to cultivating these states of awareness, learning to navigate within them, and describing them in detailed written accounts.



That is why Swedenborg's works can also serve as a practical handbook or training manual for encountering the spirit realms and corresponding levels of the self. His observations tend to affirm those of people who went temporarily to the other side without having asked for it and who were profoundly transformed by their visions of the hereafter. Likewise, Swedenborg's reports of his out-of-body experiences resonate well with the legions of contemporary reports of people who find themselves out of their bodies and who are perplexed about the situation. Out-of-body experiences occur under a wide range of circumstances: they occur during close calls with death or when gazing at scenes of wondrous natural beauty or spontaneously for no obvious reason. They have also been reported by artists performing great music or singing powerful songs and by astronomers gazing at far interstellar and intergalactic spaces through telescopes.

So Swedenborg's books are a valuable resource for all those people who have glimpsed these extraordinary states or realities for themselves and who are curious and filled with a sense of urgency by what they saw. He painstakingly wrote down everything and meticulously conducted his spiritual journal step by step, level by level, until the whole afterworld seemed to open before his eyes. He has many lessons to teach us and offers many fine examples to live by.

Even the most incredible aspects of Swedenborg's visionary capacities have their historical precedents and probably their present-day equivalents as well. Thus, an ancient Greek semi-shamanic proto-philosopher also was reputed to have walked in both this world and the next during his life. However, we do not know much about this enchanting and enigmatic figure, while the extensive visionary life of Emanuel Swedenborg is literally an open book.

I am confident that even some of the Swedenborg's incredible experiences, thought to be unique to him, are more common than one might imagine. For example, in the book you are currently reading, Wilson Van Dusen discusses Swedenborg's photism: someone on a spiritual path of inquiry may find that "when what he is thinking meets inward approval, the person may suddenly see a flash of light." Swedenborg felt that the lights were given to affirm that what he was thinking was true and conveyed a sense of comfortable familiarity.

I have my doubts about the rarity of this phenomenon. I myself experienced an episode of this that went on for weeks before it gradually faded away. When I would have an insight or come to see the truth at the end of a chain of reasoning, a light would suddenly come on, apparently in the outside world. Occasionally, I still notice this phenomenon, and, as Swedenborg noted, it definitely has a friendly feel to it. When I have mentioned this to students and audiences attending lectures and workshops, people have come forward with their own accounts of the phenomenon. I predict that a systematic investigation would uncover many more examples of this fascinating and anomalous talent.

For beginning readers of Swedenborg who are interested in life after death, his writings on the subject will feel like a breath of fresh air. Swedenborg does not shy away from the tough problems that scare away lesser thinkers. For example, many would rather not face the mind-boggling conundrum “What is the relationship between this physical world and the next life, the life after death?” Plainly, the relationship is not spatial; when we say “the world beyond death,” we are using the word *beyond* metaphorically. We cannot point to “the beyond” as we would to something at a distance.

Swedenborg tackles this difficult problem head on with an ingenious theory of correspondences. He tells us that the dimension in which we will find ourselves when we die is related to phenomena of the physical world through a complex system of correspondences. Those inclined to theological inquiries will find the way in which he elucidates this theory one of the most exciting aspects of his works.

Swedenborg’s writings were far ahead of his time, so they always seem up to date. Thus, only in recent decades have physicists conceived the holographic paradigm of reality, in which each part of an image contains the whole image. And some now think that this property may characterize the whole of the cosmos. This astounding prospect comes as no surprise to seasoned readers of Swedenborg. He wrote, “The universal heaven is such that every one is as it were the center of all.”

Studying Swedenborg is an excellent corrective for the instant-gratification mentality that characterizes today’s American society. The great ultimate questions of the soul are among the most difficult and unfathomable questions too. There is no sense pretending that the riddles of the ages will yield to the slogans of today’s latest guru on the spiritual

speakers' circuit. Swedenborg's life and works are a pointed reminder that the great questions of existence deserve a great deal of respect and reverence. We cannot expect to come to terms with the big mysteries in a day or by attending a weekend workshop. The big questions are hard and tricky, calling for the mind to be put into high gear and for committing oneself to the highest standards of reasoning.

By this criterion, Emanuel Swedenborg proved himself a suitable candidate for the job of putting the geography of the afterlife into a verbal format and for drawing a roadmap to the other side. His renditions will ring true to many spiritual adventurers and encourage them to know they are not alone.

# INTRODUCTION

*Is it possible for one man to discover too much, so much that others will be puzzled by his works, put them aside, and suspect he is mad? Yes, it is possible, although perhaps very rare. This book is an account of just such a man who journeyed too far and found too much.*

Years ago, a newspaper advertisement offered a free book that promised to clarify the whole of existence. I walked across town to a picturesque church to get the book from a kindly minister, Othmar Tobisch. The *Divine Providence* of Emanuel Swedenborg at first seemed rather abstract and dull, a rehash of Christian ideas. It was slightly intriguing because the author dealt with psychological and spiritual concepts simultaneously, but I put the book aside.

A few years later, I experienced a series of religious visions, which called me back to the book. It seemed to me that Swedenborg was talking about what I had experienced. This time I came to him with a more loving attentiveness. What had seemed dull and abstract now came alive as a man's description of his personal experiences in the worlds beyond this one. Swedenborg's description was much more detailed than my own experience, but it was apparent that we had similar experiences. In his quiet and somewhat ponderous way, he described all the worlds beyond this one and related them to this world. Gradually, I became accustomed to his style and vocabulary, for he was speaking to me across two centuries of time. What impressed me most was that he was always speaking of actual experience. I was meeting the man Ralph Waldo Emerson included in his *Representative Men*. Emerson called Swedenborg "a colossal soul [who] lies vast abroad on his times, uncomprehended by them, and requires a long focal distance to be seen. . . . One of the . . . mastodons of literature, he is not to be measured by whole colleges of ordinary scholars."<sup>1</sup>

As a clinical psychologist with religious leanings, I took great pleasure in seeing a man moving easily in both realms like one life process. I started

acquiring everything Swedenborg wrote and everything I could find written about him. It took me two years to get a photocopy of his so-called *Journal of Dreams*; when I did, I was impressed by his struggle to understand his dreams and the internal guidance system they reflected. His five-volume *Spiritual Diary* was like a strange treasure trove of experiences with demons and spirits. His biographers clothed the man in human history. It was a relief to find a giant six-volume concordance of his works; with this work, just for recreation, I could take an idea, such as insanity, and trace all he said on it through his many volumes. A few scholars helped clarify different areas with their distillations of his works. With all of this, gradually, the vast, complex landscape of his writings became clear.

I had pursued all the principal writers in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. Only Carl Jung even approached the stature of Swedenborg. Swedenborg knew personally, through experience, that Self that Jung knew only by speculation on its symbolic manifestations. All other writers could be comprehended in short order. I was delighted to find that Swedenborg found that books are available in heaven; his own writing is so vast that I am pleased his books can be pursued even there!

My purpose in writing this work is simple: to bring Swedenborg within the reach of many. There are a number of keys to aid this grasp. It is necessary to understand the age and circumstances in which he worked. He lived at the dawn of science in the eighteenth century and mastered all the sciences of his day. Although the strange richness of his later psychological-spiritual findings would later get him labeled as either a great mystic or a madman, he never changed fundamentally from the scientist who simply wanted to understand and describe the whole of existence. When he finished all the known outer world, he started to work on the mind. He took an unusually direct and short route through his psyche.

Many of his religious followers are puzzled by his dreams, visions, and trances. Because the way he penetrated the psyche is so little known today, it is necessary to explain how he did it in some detail. This key, which makes a good deal of sense out of what he found, has largely been missing until now. If even the beginnings of his method are followed by average persons, they will make the same surprising discoveries that he made, but, unfortunately, the inward journey he took is too dangerous and difficult for others to follow. Swedenborg was later to say that madness is possible along the path he took, and I believe he is right. He released tremendous

forces within his own mind. Inner guidance led him to personal discoveries and changes that at first did not seem entirely wise or safe. Only from the perspective of later years could he see the wisdom in the changes that had been wrought on him by this inner process. Swedenborg was, in effect, feeling his way along in the dark recesses of the psyche toward the Divine. We, on the other hand, have the advantage of two centuries of discoveries and modern psychology to clarify our understanding of what was occurring within him.

Swedenborg was looking for God within and was beginning to find the One. What he discovered would make him a much more humble and complete man. He had to meet and integrate much of his own unconscious. As he became a more appropriate instrument through these changes, the hand of the Divine became more apparent. Finally, after scourging himself for a final and relatively persistent fault, he was introduced into heaven and hell. Perhaps many down through time had had glimpses of the worlds beyond this one, but Swedenborg was to have free and relatively constant access for many years. This claim alone became an obstacle for many people to accepting his findings because it sounds so immodest. Actually, this proud and great scientist became unusually modest before these other worlds were opened up by him.

It requires neither acceptance of Swedenborg's reliability nor one's own death to verify what he described. Because all the worlds beyond this one are imaged in the processes of mind, it is possible to check how accurately Swedenborg's description accords with our personal experience. It is no accident that the worlds beyond this are reflected in mind. That is the way the mind was made, and we are made in the image. We are the microcosm that reflects the macrocosm. Even if there were no heaven and hell, Swedenborg's description would remain a fascinating picture of all the mansions that make up mind and humankind's experience. Just as incidental details, there were a number of visionary events witnessed by others that suggest Swedenborg had really entered other worlds. He didn't consider these particular episodes important enough to record. Also, strange visionary experiences of contemporary persons echo Swedenborg so closely as to suggest the current validity of his reports.

Visions and even heaven and hell are somewhat incidental to what Swedenborg was getting at. He says it is perfectly appropriate for any person to ask and to seek to understand the whole of existence. The whole

of existence, all the worlds, may be understood. But the root understanding, the fundament of all the rest, is how we relate to each other, what good we do or what use we serve. Here Swedenborg comes to the fundamental understanding of all religions. Although Swedenborg was Christian, he spoke about the core of all religions. As he noted, all religions are like different colored stones in the crown of the One King. In both his psychology and his emphasis on how we relate to each other, Swedenborg's journey to other worlds comes to earth in what everyone can understand and appreciate. Again, both the vast and seemingly remote and the near-at-hand turn out to be intimately related. The results of Swedenborg's journey in and understanding of all worlds, when translated into the concrete realities of the present, provoke in most people a feeling of immediate recognition: "Well, of course, that's true." Truth for him rests in the potentialities of the human (it is written on the heart) and can be recognized and experienced by everyone. Do you want to reach heaven? Are you now acting by the good you know? The far and the near, the psychological and the spiritual, the other worlds and this one can all be found in the now and seem so matter-of-fact, so familiar when found.

I would like to thank the many followers of Swedenborg who have preserved, translated into over twenty languages, and published his works for two centuries so that they might remain available. I wish to thank the Swedenborg Foundation of West Chester, Pennsylvania, for its generous support. For a detailed review of the whole manuscript I thank Dr. George Dole and for detailed comments, my thanks go to Alice Van Boven and the Reverend Donald Rose.

WILSON VAN DUSEN  
UKIAH, CALIFORNIA  
2004

# 1

## THE MAN



I boldly descended a huge stairway, which after a while turned into a ladder; below it, there was a hole that went down to quite a great depth; it was difficult to get to the other side without falling into the hole. On the other side, there were persons to whom I reached out my hand to help them cross over. I woke up. This is the danger in which I am: of falling into the abyss unless I receive help.

*Dream Diary §20<sup>1</sup>*

SO BEGINS A MOST REMARKABLE JOURNEY INTO INNER SPACE and the worlds beyond. This is a privately recorded dream of Emanuel Swedenborg, who may have been one of the most gifted men to have ever lived. In itself, the dream is remarkable enough. Although written over two centuries ago, the dreamer reflects a modern understanding of the nature of dreams, namely, that a dream is a dramatic representation of the present life of the dreamer. To get the most from it, the dreamer should identify with all parts of it. He could easily have flattered himself as the helper of others, yet he sees the danger as in him and interprets it that he himself needs help.

But even more remarkable, this oldest and largest series of dreams and associations, written in 1744, was written down by a man who may have been among the last to have mastered all known knowledge. His



attainments before he started work on his dreams were tremendous. He had studied all the known sciences. His discoveries about the human brain or his suggestion of the nebular hypothesis would have been sufficient for fame, recognition, and public acceptance. He could have quit at the age of fifty-six. Instead he took on psychology and religion.

Swedenborg's dreams were recorded at the time he was breaking into the inner realms; he discovered so much that his account became incredible. It was as though he found too much on this inner journey and described it too well in some thirty-six volumes. Future generations would not have time to digest all he found. In some respects, he remained too far in advance of the findings of others, which would come centuries later. Critics would seize on one or more of his most unusual private journals and call him insane, but those who understood his discoveries would pray for a similar madness. Most would come to think of him as an obscure mystic and overlook the fact that he had completed over one hundred works in all the known sciences. His later discoveries in the mystical realm were so far-reaching and disturbing to our conventional views that they overshadowed all his earlier scientific work. So, before we follow the journey inward, it would be well to grasp who Swedenborg was and how he lived. This firm base in his reality will make all the rest seem more probable.

## **The Life of Emanuel Swedenborg**

The name "Emanuel" is biblical and means "God is with us." Swedenborg's father, Jesper Swedberg, was a Lutheran bishop attached to the Swedish court. In another age, his father would have been a saint. He believed in the presence of angels and demons and occasionally dealt with them, which was common for his time and place. Swedberg embarked on several publishing ventures, trying to enlighten his countrymen and improve public-school education. For instance, he tried to make the Bible available to common people. He must have been too busy a church official to have been very close to his children.

Emanuel was the third of nine children. His mother died when he was only eight years old. For most of his formative years, he lived in the university town of Uppsala. Relatively little is known of these years. He lived among conservative church and university people. Early feminine influences came from his busy stepmother and his older sister Anna. He

received a classical university education with a heavy emphasis on Latin, Greek, and literature, to the level of a master's degree. His earliest published works were Latin poetry. The young Emanuel was thought of as a poet.

From his early years, Emanuel Swedenborg had a tendency to speculate on ultimate questions. As a boy, he pondered religious issues, and his father considered him a promising religious prodigy. The spirit of the father and son differed, though. The father simply accepted the reality of religion. The son examined, questioned, and speculated. When Jesper Swedberg was elevated to the position of archbishop of Skara, Emanuel, now a young university student, went to live with his brother-in-law Eric Benzelius, his senior by thirteen years. Benzelius was gifted with broad interests in science, and Swedenborg found fertile ground for his need to search, question, and find. The youthful Latin poet soon became a burgeoning scientist, somewhat to the dismay of the archbishop.

Among his relatives and friends were some of Sweden's earliest scientists, including Christopher Polhem. Polhem promised his oldest daughter to Emanuel, but she married another man. Then Polhem promised Swedenborg the hand of his younger daughter Emerentia. She rejected Swedenborg, who released her from the formal contract. He then vowed never to have any serious attachment to women, a promise he kept, even though there are many indications that he was highly attracted to women and may have had mistresses in his early years.

Swedenborg's family was moderately well off. His father was a professor of theology, in addition to being a bishop, and his stepmother had mining connections in her family. The young college graduate became a very practical man, searching out the best method of doing things or learning new sciences. The energy other young men might devote to family and job were devoted to learning by Swedenborg. He lived on meager support from his father. Later, his scientific works came to the attention of the king, and he was appointed assessor of mines for Sweden, being one of a handful of men who oversaw all aspects of Sweden's mining interests. This was the only actual job he ever held.

His penchant for knowledge was put to good use. He would travel throughout Europe, gather notes on the latest mining methods, and introduce them in his own country. Thus, many of his early inventions had to do with mining machinery. He toured Swedish mines on horseback, went

down many a mine shaft, and suggested ways to improve methods. It appears he had considerable influence on Sweden's mining industry. He was superior to his position, even though it provided a salary when he needed it. Eventually, he published a definitive, beautifully illustrated summary of all that was known of minerals.

Something of his hunger for science can be illustrated by the following excerpts from his letter to Eric Benzelius written when he was twenty-two:

With respect to the twenty-four foot telescope, I ordered the glasses for it at Marchal's who is said to be the only one patronized by the Royal Society. These glasses are beyond expectation expensive for they cost 40 shillings. . . .

I visit daily the best mathematicians here in town. I have been with Flamsteed, who is considered the best astronomer in England, and who is constantly taking observations, which, together with Paris Observations, will give us some day a correct theory respecting the motion of the moon . . . and with its help there may be found a true longitude at sea [a problem Swedenborg would later attempt to solve]. . . .

Newton has laid a good foundation for correcting irregularities of the moon in his *Principia*; he has however not yet published the tables, but simply the theory; he has also corrected in it the precession of the equinoxes, and the periods of the tides.

You encourage me to go on with my studies; but I think that I ought rather to be discouraged, as I have such an "*immoderate desire*" for them, especially for astronomy and mechanics. I also turn my lodgings to some use, and change them often; at first I was at a watchmaker's, and afterwards at a cabinetmaker's, and now I am at a mathematical instrument maker's, from them I steal their trades, which some day will be of use to me. I have recently computed for my own pleasure several useful tables for the latitude of Upsal, and all the solar and lunar eclipses which will take place between 1712 and 1721.<sup>2</sup>

When Swedenborg was thirty-one, the whole family was ennobled. The name of Swedberg became Swedenborg, thereby referring to the family estate. As the oldest son, Baron Emanuel Swedenborg later took his position in the Swedish House of Nobles. It is said that he never missed a meeting even though he traveled all over Europe for years at a time. Swedenborg was never comfortable speaking to groups. He stammered when nervous, but he could write. He wrote many important bills, or "memorials," on peace, the economy of the country, liquor regulation, and other subjects.

Being a leader of his country's mining and a nobleman were only background to Swedenborg's ambitions, however. He was driven as though he had to know everything. He became fluent in nine languages, and most of his writing was in Latin, the scholarly language of his day. As incidental hobbies, he learned bookbinding, watchmaking, cabinetmaking, instrument-making, engraving, marble inlay, lens-grinding, mechanics, and other

trades. He was no amateur either. The telescope was just being developed, so he ground his own lens and made his own. Anton von Leeuwenhoek was beginning to discover microbes with a primitive microscope; Swedenborg couldn't afford to buy one, so he made his own. When some of his friends wanted the printed sheets to make a world globe but couldn't obtain these complex forms, Swedenborg designed and engraved his own. From time to time, he also developed inventions, such as crude but interesting ideas for a submarine, a flying machine, and a rapid-firing air gun. A working version of his airplane was built and flown in the late nineteenth century. He also worked on more practical things, such as the world's largest drydock, an experimental tank for ships, stoves, an ear trumpet, methods of pumping, a fire extinguisher, a musical machine, house heating, and a steel rolling mill. At one point, he directed a project to get small ships fourteen miles over mountains and valleys to help the Swedish king win a battle. This doesn't sound like the work of an impractical mystic. He developed more tools than could readily be used or appreciated. Repeatedly he found himself ahead of his time and felt restricted by the conservatism of others.

In a way, all this was just trivia. His real power was in his scientific work. A partial list of his publications will give a sample of his scope.

	<b>Date</b>	<b>Title</b>
1.	1714	Inclinations of the Mind
2.	1716	Society of Sciences
3.	1716	Soils and Muds
4.	1716	Fossils
5.	1716	Sailing Upstream
6.	1716	Stereometry
7.	1716	Echo
8.	1717	Salt Boileries
9.	1717	Tin Work
10.	1717	Stoppage of the Earth
11.	1717	Instituting an Observatory
12.	1717	Commerce and Manufacture
13.	1717	Fire and Colors
14.	1718	Algebra
15.	1718	To Find the Longitude
16.	1718	Welfare of a Country
17.	1719	Earth's Revolution
18.	1719	Height of Water
19.	1719	Blast Furnaces
20.	1719	Money and Measures
21.	1719	Discovering Mines
22.	1719	Docks, Sluice and Salt Works
23.	1719	Geometry and Algebra
24.	1720	Fall and Rise of Lake Wenner
25.	1721	Indications of the Deluge
26.	1721	Principles of Natural Things
27.	1721	Iron and Fire
28.	1721	Miscellaneous Observations
29.	1722	Conserving Heat
30.	1722	Working Copper
31.	1722	The Magnet
32.	1722	Calculation Concerning Currency
33.	1722	Hydrostatics
34.	1722	The Genuine Treatment of Metals

35.	1723	Mining Copper and Iron
36.	1723	Establishing Iron Works
37.	1724	On Silver
38.	1724	On Sulphur and Pyrites
39.	1724	On Vitriol
40.	1725	On Salt
41.	1733	Philosophical and Anatomical Subjects
42.	1733	Motion of the Elements
43.	1733	Empirical Psychology
44.	1734	The Infinite
45.	1734	The Mechanism of the Soul and Body
46.	1738	The Infinite and the Finite
47.	1739	Knowledge of the Soul
48.	1740	Muscles in General
49.	1740	Economy of the Soul's Kingdom
50.	1740	The Skin and Tongue
51.	1740	In Celebration of Printing
52.	1740	The Brain
53.	1740	Corpuscular Philosophy
54.	1740	Declination of the Needle
55.	1740	Mathematical Philosophy of Universals
56.	1741	The Fibre
57.	1741	Red Blood
58.	1741	The Five Senses
59.	1741	Action
60.	1742	Rational Psychology
61.	1743	The Generative Organs

These represent Swedenborg's early scientific works; they do not include any of his later theological writings, which his followers consider far more important. A pattern appears in these minor accomplishments. Swedenborg's scientific wanderings led from the outer material world to the human body and into the psyche. In many instances, he summed up all that was known in a particular field and then went to another area. There is a practical base to his early work; he was interested in processes that enabled people to do things better. Although he studied at astronomical

observatories and participated in anatomical dissections, he felt he wasn't as good as others at direct observation, for example, in anatomy. Thus, much of his anatomical work was based on the observations of others. He took their observations, put them together into a coherent system, and extracted what the others had not seen. In this way, he made several major discoveries in anatomy. According to one scholar,

Swedenborg's contributions in the medical sciences, prepared in Latin, lay unnoticed in the library of the Swedish Royal Academy of Sciences until the 1880's, when Tafel translated into English the four-volume treatise, *The Brain*. Included in this monograph were observations on cortical localizations, the somatotropic arrangement of the motor cortex, reference to integrative action of the nervous system, the significance of the pituitary gland, the formation of the cerebrospinal fluid, and a pronouncement on what is now known as the neuron theory. The cerebral cortex, the intermediary between the sensory receptors and the soul, conditions the faculties unique to man such as imagination, judgment, will, and the source of motor volition.

The pituitary gland, the "arch gland" of Swedenborg, was recognized as possessing special function in the body economy, two centuries before contemporary endocrinology. Also, he extended the observations of Willis on the formation of cerebrospinal fluid by the fourth ventricle.<sup>3</sup>

We might add that Swedenborg was also the first to discover the function of the cerebellum. In his understanding of the brain, Swedenborg was far ahead of his time. The tireless Emanuel was looking for the soul of the human being in his anatomical studies. At first, he was quite sure he could discover it, but later this hope dimmed. After his experiences in heaven, he recognized that the soul was really the life of an individual. He was searching for what was beyond the visible, but he had first to look closely at the physical basis of human experience.

In his scientific and philosophical works, one gets the impression of an immense intellect driven to understand everything. Where microscopes couldn't penetrate, he borrowed analogies from mathematics to speculate on the submicroscopic as he described molecules, atoms, and the subatomic integrative principles of creation. Yet he was becoming wary of his ability to reason his way into any realm. There is a brilliant intellectual coldness to his later scientific works and a feeling that he was perhaps reaching too far. Yet, as in the above anatomical works, his reach sometimes described findings one and two centuries ahead of his time. For anyone who has seen the clear, sure ease and beauty of his later works, these early scientific

works have the sad quality of a lonely, brilliant man working tirelessly to reason out all of nature's secrets.

At fifty-six, Swedenborg had mastered all known natural science and stood at the door of psychology. Consider his life at this time. He was now moderately wealthy, especially for a man of simple tastes. He had half a pension from the Board of Mines and earnings from publications and mining investments. He built a small estate on the outskirts of Stockholm. On a large lot, there were several small structures, a barn, and a large garden decoratively laid out. Later he built a wooden maze for the entertainment of visitors, especially their children. He also built a clever triangular house on the northern edge of his land. It had three double doors and three corner windows. When all of the doors were opened and a mirror was placed in front of a fourth wall along a board fence, "three gardens are seen reflected in it, in which everything is represented as in the same order as in the original garden" (Docs., I, 392). In addition, there was a bower for birds. Swedenborg lived here whenever he was in Sweden. He had a gardener who planted vegetables and lime trees and whose wife was the housekeeper. Carl Robsahm, a treasurer of the Stockholm Bank, later described Swedenborg's situation:

Swedenborg's property was about a stone's cast in length and in breadth. The rooms of his dwelling-house were small and plain; but were sufficient for him, though scarcely for anyone else. Although he was a learned man, no books were ever seen in his room except his Hebrew and Greek Bible, and his manuscript indexes to his own works, by which, in making quotations, he was saved the trouble of examining all that he had previously written or printed.

Swedenborg worked without much regard to the distinction of day and night, having no fixed time for labour or rest. "When I am sleepy," he said, "I go to bed." All the attendance he required from his servant, his gardener's wife, consisted in her making his bed, and placing a large jug of water in his anteroom, his house-keeping being so arranged that he could make his own coffee in his study; and this coffee he drank in great abundance day and night, and with a great deal of sugar. When not invited out, his dinner consisted of nothing but a roll soaked in boiled milk; and this was his meal always when he dined at home. He never at that time used wine or strong drink, nor did he eat anything in the evening; but in company he would eat freely, and indulge moderately in a social glass.

. . . I must also mention a blind door which he had made; and when this was opened, another one appeared with a window in it; and as both these doors were directly opposite a green hedge where a beautiful bird cage was placed, and as the window in the inner door was made of looking glass, the effect was most charming and surprising to those who opened it with a view of entering Swedenborg's other garden, which according to his statement was much more beautiful than the first one. Swedenborg derived much sport from this arrangement, especially when inquisitive and curious young ladies came into his garden.



Before his house there was an ornamental flower bed upon which he expended considerable sums of money; he had there even some of those singular Dutch figures of animals, and other objects shaped out of box-trees; but this bed he did not keep up in his later years. The cultivation of the garden, and its produce, he left to the gardener.

The fire in the stove of his study was never allowed to go out, from autumn, throughout the whole of winter, until spring; for as he always needed coffee, and as he made it himself, without milk or cream, and as he had never any definite time for sleeping, he always required to have a fire.

His sleeping room was always without fire; and when he lay down, according to the severity of the winter, he covered himself either with three or four woollen blankets; but I remember one winter, which was so cold that he was obliged to move his bed into the study.

As soon as he awoke, he went into his study,—where he always found glowing embers—put wood upon the burning coals, and a few pieces of birchrind, which for convenience he used to purchase in bundles, so as to be able to make a fire speedily; and then he sat down to write. . . .

His dress in winter consisted of a fur coat of reindeer skin, and in summer of a dressing-gown; both well worn, as became a philosopher's wardrobe. His wearing apparel was simple, but neat. Still it happened sometimes, that, when he prepared to go out, and his people did not call his attention to it, something would be forgotten or neglected in his dress; so that, for instance, he would put one buckle of gems and another of silver in his shoes; an instance of which absence of mind I myself saw at my father's house, where he was invited to dine; and which occurrence greatly amused several young ladies. . . . (Docs I, 31–34)

When he started out on what were to be his boldest and greatest discoveries, he seemed to regard all his prior work as just a prelude, a preparation, and in later years he said as much. His persistent search for the soul had taken him through anatomy and physiology to the door of psychology.<sup>4</sup> With his usual thoroughness he surveyed and summarized all that was then known of psychology. In the mid-eighteenth century, psychology had not yet fully emerged as a separate discipline. A mixture of philosophy, religion, and comments on moral matters, it showed little direct grasp of inner experience. Swedenborg dutifully searched out the wisdom of Aristotle, Plato, and other wise ones down to his time. For over a century after Swedenborg, psychology was destined to remain faculty psychology—that is, the inner life was divided into faculties such as memory, rationality, avarice, will, etc., and then doctors would speculate on the interactions between these faculties. The resultant psychology sounded like a dull philosophical tome. For instance, before his spiritual enlightenment, Swedenborg described sexual relations in this dull, overly intellectual way:

The act of venereal love is the actual conjunction and union of two bodies into one. Its most deeply laid up cause is drawn from the soul and the pure intellectory, which regard effects not as effects but as ends. Their ends are the existence of society and the procreation of its members. . . . The rational mind is what perceives and understands these ends, partly

from itself and partly from things revealed; the animus merely desires the effect; and the body carries it out. How great is the desire of this end in the soul and the pure intellectory is manifestly apparent from the delights of the body and its incitements to this effect.<sup>5</sup>

Here he described sexual relations from the viewpoint of reason, as though reason was taken as the real nature and substance of all mental experience and reason would rationalize the odd doings within the mind and body. This kind of thinking very much reflected his day.

Swedenborg was probably unaware that he took a great step when he tried to describe mental experience directly. From his standpoint, the decision was natural enough. He had collected facts from every other area. Why not try to penetrate inward and observe the operations of the psyche directly? Perhaps he could catch the soul at work. And he did. Phenomenology, as this study is now called, gathers the raw data of experience and attempts to understand and describe human experience itself. In 1744, he dutifully started recording and interpreting his dreams. He had occasionally written down dreams as far back as 1736, but these occupied just a few pages and are now lost. When his relatives saw the nature of these early dreams, they tore them out of his notebook probably regarding them as too revealing. The general public hadn't examined or faced up to the racy nature of average dreams. From 1744 on, Swedenborg very systematically set down dreams and inner experiences in what became his *Dream Diary* and his five-volume *Spiritual Diary*.<sup>6</sup> Swedenborg never intended either of these for publication, since they were personal notebooks of an inward explorer. Despite this, they are of tremendous value because they detail the path he was traveling. When the *Dream Diary* (also called the *Journal of Dreams*) was published in 1859, eighty-seven years after his death, it caused a sensation. The man's inner struggles were laid bare. Even his sexual needs were apparent. His followers were caught between the scholarship and the need to serve Swedenborg's interests. While most dreams were translated for all to read, the sexual ones were hidden in Latin by editors in some early editions.

The dreams and the *Spiritual Diary* were written at a time when Swedenborg's life was changing radically. The super intellect was going inward to find the wellspring of his psyche. His writings before and after this period are in direct contrast. Before this period, he was a dry, proper, brilliant, and somewhat proud intellect. After this, he was a humble man of great human feeling. He retained the need to order and explain all things,

but he now cut to the heart of the human situation with remarkable incisiveness. The scientist became the mystic after he looked within. There followed such a complex series of visions and disturbed psychic experiences that a few of Swedenborg's followers are not sure of his sanity. Many of those who are taken by the beauty and richness of his later works are bothered by the mixture of strange experiences that crowd his private journals as he went within.

But what of Swedenborg's outer life as he began to bend his talent for investigation to the sources of mind itself? As numerous acquaintances and documents attest, his outer life remained quite normal. He was a brilliant nobleman who enjoyed traveling, seeing things of interest, visiting new places, and meeting new people. His private travel notes, for the years 1739 and 1743, respectively, give some impression:

On the 8th they had horse races; on the 9th racing in chariots; on the 14th pugilistic matches, for which handsome prizes were appointed.

March 14. I left Leghorn [Italy] for Genoa in a felucca; on the way we were in great fear of the Algerines.

March 17. I arrive in Genoa; it has a beautiful harbor, splendid palaces of Balbi, Negro, Doria, and others. I saw the government building and also handsome paintings, where I found more living persons represented than I had seen before; likewise the monument of Columbus, who was a Genoese. I saw the doge, who is always in red down to the very shoes. . . .

Docs II, 129

August 12. I arrived at Hamburg and took lodgings at the Kaiserhof, where the Countess De la Gardie likewise stayed. I met Baron Hamilton, Reuterholm, Trievald, Konig . . . and was presented to Prince Augustus, the brother of His Majesty, who spoke Swedish; afterwards I was presented by Lesch, the marshal in chief to His Royal Highness Adolphus Frederic; I submitted to him the contents of the book [*The Animal Kingdom*] which I am about to have printed, and showed him the reviews of the former work.

August 17. I left Hamburg, and after crossing the Elbe, came to Buxtehude. I there saw, to the extent of a German mile, the most charming country I have yet seen in Germany, having passes through a continuous orchard of apple, pear, plum, walnut, chestnut trees, limes and elms.

Docs II, 132

He enjoyed travel. Everywhere he examined interesting settings, major buildings and libraries and met prominent people. It is said he never turned down a dinner invitation, turning up in one of his two dress suits. He personally knew most of the prominent scientists of his time. His journeys took him from Stockholm to Paris, Amsterdam, and London, and back to Stockholm repeatedly. His voluminous writings made it necessary to take lodgings near his printers. Even when his handwriting was fast and careless,

the Dutch printers could read it. He had to prepare a clean copy of every book for the printer written in his tiny handwriting with a quill pen. Then there was the task of correcting galley proofs and the numerous business details of his works, which were appearing in several languages.

As the years wore on, his habits seem to have become simpler. The man who earlier recorded being introduced to various noblemen and kings would take six-shilling-a-week lodgings in London. His study of inner experiences and writing took most of his time. When asked how he could write so much, he casually said his angel dictated to him, and he could write fast enough (Docs II, 1017). A number of eyewitnesses heard him calling out to God when alone or speaking to invisible figures. His servant learned not to bother the master when he was busy with these higher matters. Yet he could be interrupted deep in the midst of a trance and with little hesitation deal with a startled visitor. He must have enjoyed beautiful visions. When he completed one religious work, he saw “the angelic heaven from the east to the west, and from the south the north, appeared of a deep scarlet color with the most beautiful flowers” (Docs II, 1008).

Although he concealed his rich inner life for many years, accidental demonstrations of his now-extraordinary powers, often at social gatherings, gradually let the world know that this was the man who was anonymously publishing such challenging spiritual books. He was so frank concerning his spiritual experiences afterward that he easily became the focus of any social gathering. Even though many of his most priceless works were sold literally for pennies at his own expense, recognition of this work came slowly. But when people started talking about and being impressed by the totally new understanding and viewpoints reflected in these works, denunciation also came to the fore. A very unpleasant experience occurred when he was eighty-one. For a time, some religious leaders in Sweden tried to ban the importation of his works into Sweden and tried to get him declared insane. They saw him as a crazy heretic upsetting the state religion, which was Lutheranism. One simply did not speak of God and heaven and hell from direct experience, especially when this contradicted established doctrine. The powers that would persecute him failed. Swedenborg was too well known by too many, including heads of states.

Even in his eighties, he was described as a vigorous, congenial, sociable gentleman. He had almost no health problems, except for toothaches, which he attributed to the acts of demons. Nature compensated, for he grew a

whole new set of teeth late in life. It was as though the inner simplicity of his essential teachings were reflected in his outer life, for he spent his last days living with a shopkeeper who sold chintz, muslin, and handkerchiefs in London. The shopkeeper's numerous children favored the old man over their own parents because he never failed to bring them sweets from his walks. In fact, the only thing unusual about him was that he spoke as casually and forthrightly of heaven and hell and their inhabitants as he could talk of the citizens of London.

Swedenborg's experiences were normal but uncommon. A few others may have gone through a similar series, but rarely has anyone so painstakingly described an inward journey. Rarely has such a powerful intellect ever set out to unearth the basis of its own life and experience, and in so doing, stepped through into heaven and hell.

## GOING WITHIN



IT IS ESSENTIAL TO UNDERSTAND HOW SWEDENBORG went within, for this is the key to his later findings. His method involves a number of interrelated psychological processes that even today, two centuries later, are not well understood. What is now known of the normal events to be expected from these processes will lend credibility to all his later findings.

Since childhood, Swedenborg had a personal practice that happens to be one of the ancient Hindu Yoga and Buddhist ways to enlightenment. He didn't know he was following an Eastern religious practice because the literature on this had not yet been translated, yet his method is not surprising in one who so much enjoyed intellectual analysis. He would relax, close his eyes, and focus in with total concentration on a problem. At the same time, his breathing would nearly stop. Awareness of the outer world and even bodily sensation would diminish and perhaps disappear. His whole existence would focus on the one issue he wanted to understand.

Bear in mind that he probably had more than the usual power of concentration. A lifetime of seeking answers to great problems had given him much practice. The slowing and limiting of breathing are parts of an inward concentration. Simply trying to stop breathing in this state produces anxious reminders of the need for air. First, there is the concentration; then the lessened breathing follows. The build-up of carbon dioxide in the blood

may have something to do with intensifying inner experiences. The problem Swedenborg was concentrating on would blossom out in new, rich and surprising ways. He first practiced this approach as a child during morning and evening prayers, which probably lent an inner intensity to the meaning of prayer.<sup>1</sup> Judging from his writings, I would guess he stumbled on this method as a child, used it relatively little during his scientific period, and then came back to it when he tried to understand the psyche itself.

In his early fifties (1740–1744), Swedenborg was finishing several large volumes on anatomy and the brain. It was already becoming apparent to him that he wasn't going to find the soul through anatomical studies, that he would have to look at the operations of mind itself. Notice his situation. Other than his self-imposed task of writing, there was no work required of him. There was no family to disturb him. He had more than enough income. His servants would help him in his basic needs. He could spend hours and even days in deep thought and meditation. If he lapsed into some inner state, his housekeeper and gardener would not bother him. His situation was nearly ideal for one who would explore inward.

He used this intense meditation to penetrate the one matter at hand. At first, this approach was hyperintellectual. He adopted a method that would eliminate all matters extraneous to the problem, even breathing. Unknown to him, the method would bring him to the door of inner processes and change his whole understanding of the mind.

In 1742, while writing on psychology, Swedenborg described meditation from direct experience. "It follows from the above, that we are able to approach nearer and nearer to the pure intellect [which was his main aim] doing this by means of universal ideas and a kind of passive potency." Passive potency is an attentive receptiveness as in meditation. He felt it was possible to deal with universal ideas, understanding at once all the implications of a thing. This alone suggests considerable practice in this area. He went on to write:

[If] we remove particular ideas, that is, withdraw the mind from terms and ideas that are broken, limited, and material, and at the same time, from desires and loves that are purely natural, then the human intellect, being at rest from heterogeneous throngs, as it were, and remaining only in its own ideas and those proper to the pure intellect, causes our mind to undergo no other changes, or to draw forth no other reasons save those that are concordant with the ideas of the pure intellect. In this way our intellect enjoys inmost repose and inmost delight; for this concurrence then appears as an influx of a certain light of intelligence which illuminates the whole sphere of thought, and, by a certain consensus, I know not whence,

draws its whole mind together, and inmosty dictates that a thing is true or good, or that it is false or evil. In this way our intellect is perfected in judgment which grows mature.

*Rational Psychology* § 154

This is the description of an intensely intellectual man who is experienced in using meditation as a distilling and perfecting of thought. Yet this is basically empirical. He is describing what he has repeatedly experienced. As he went further along this path, he became thoroughly empirical. He described what he found even when later dealing with the most insane-sounding events. Although he started this intense meditation as a way of perfecting the intellect of a philosopher, he had stumbled on the value of awakening and describing experience itself. He was a philosopher becoming a phenomenological psychologist. He was bent on finding and describing what he saw.

In meditation, everyone experiences difficulty in keeping his or her mind on one thought. The following shows that Swedenborg also had difficulty:

In the rational mind are diverse loves, and these occupy its whole court and draw it to their sides. . . . In general there are superior loves and inferior loves, the superior being spiritual, and the inferior natural and corporeal. When concentrated in the rational mind, these loves are wont to contend. . . . When our mind has been occupied with profound and long-continued meditation and this is burned out by some corporeal loves, if we then wish to recall to mind things spiritual and more pure, we find this impossible unless the former love with its thought has first been cast out. Such is the case if we wish to call upon God in prayer; we find that the thought can never be pure but is clouded, as it were, and occupied with dense darkness.

*Rational Psychology* §367

During this period, Swedenborg began to experience the rare and little-known phenomena called photism. The person who meditates intensely, seeking inner guidance, may find a signal system to guide him. When what he is thinking meets inward approval, the person may suddenly see a flash of light. The light may vary from a pinpoint to a large area, but it is characteristically bright. One normal individual of my acquaintance sees a bright pale-blue light signaling a correct thought and a black spot signaling a wrong one. Some saints report similar experiences. Swedenborg saw an affirming flame. "Such a flame appeared to me so often and, indeed, in different sizes with a diversity of color and splendor, that during some months when I was writing a certain work, hardly a day passed in which a flame did not appear as vividly as the flame of a household hearth. It was a sign of approval."<sup>2</sup>



Some might confuse this with explosions of light seen by people with migraine or other minor cerebral conditions. Swedenborg's was a formed image, not random flashes. He tested its validity. It was given to affirm that what he was thinking was true and was also given with a pleasant sensation, as though a friend had affirmed a truth.

Swedenborg didn't put a great deal of store by this phenomenon, mentioning it only a few times in his writings. It has several implications, however. His inner processes were quite involved in what he was doing and wished to guide him. They could also break forth into consciousness. (We will see later that much more was to come.) Last, there is symbolism in that he saw a flame. The flame, both by its color and warmth, symbolizes love and feeling. Although his was still a ponderous intellect, love and feeling were to come forth later. The flame was another and a rare sign that he was opening up inner processes.

What Swedenborg began as an intense, intellectual form of meditation opened out into an exploration of the hypnogogic state, dreams, and, later, trances. This is a usual series of discoveries as one goes inward. Few can reach the trance level he reached, where the breathing almost stops. I would like to emphasize the normal findings in meditation and the hypnogogic state, experiences available to anyone who troubles to seek them and are relatively simple and harmless. The trance is another matter. The phenomena anyone can find in meditation and the hypnogogic state amply illustrate the path Swedenborg was exploring and give normal individuals samples of the kind of discoveries he was making. Swedenborg seems far less strange to those who bother to look at the same area of human experience.

Very few people, however, have practiced meditation or looked at the hypnogogic experience, so it would be useful to elaborate on the usual things one can expect. I stress *usual*. Everyone will have roughly the same findings, though the symbolism that emerges may differ. In some ways, the reader may have to experience these states, described in more detail in my book, *The Natural Depth in Man*, to appreciate what they have to teach.<sup>3</sup>

In meditation, first the mind wanders off. It takes practice to stay focused. Like a restless beast, the mind jumps to an itch, distracting noises, random thoughts, worries, etc. The original problem that inspired the meditation vanishes many times. Just a little work of this kind teaches the meditator that he isn't in control of his mind. The effort to call the mind

back sets up an internal split between the person's concentration and the appearance of a host of other odds and ends. The observant person may be beguiled into one of these mental perambulations only to find later that he or she wandered off into a dream and sleep. Zen monks doing this same sort of thing sit up with eyes fixed on a spot to prevent sleep. It takes practice to tame the restless inner beast and not be carried off by it.

Next, the observer learns to watch inner processes. The first surfacing of these inner processes was largely what caused the earlier disturbances. The observer watches feelings, ideas, faint images, words, sentences, and later whole scenes come and go. He is watching mental processes occur spontaneously. It is common that the observer, seeking inner events, overreacts upon seeing or hearing something. This overalertness tends to knock out the spontaneous processes emerging from the psyche, which are delicate and faint at first. A balance needs to be learned between the responding observer and spontaneous phenomena that turn up. At this level, the original meditation has deepened into the hypnogogic state.

The hypnogogic state is one that is usually experienced by everyone twice a day, going into and out of sleep. Few people ever pause at this level to explore the spontaneous wellsprings of mind bubbling forth, a delicate balance of self-awareness and the presence of inner processes. If caught up in the inner processes, one can be swept away into a dream and sleep. The same symbolism in dreams appears in the hypnogogic state, but one can't normally talk to or deal with dreams. There is enough self-awareness in the hypnogogic state to remember, record, and even talk to inner processes. This makes it a much more fruitful area for one who wishes to explore inward and even experiment with inner processes.

Swedenborg explored the hypnogogic state more than anyone else has before or since. Yet most of the time, he appeared to have gone beyond it into a trance. In the trance, inner experiences are no longer delicate and faint, but are clear, intense, and real. Personal awareness still exists, but bodily awareness is less or lost altogether. Many people have been frightened by falling into a trance while going to sleep. Suddenly there is a feeling of intensified consciousness but also a paralysis of the body. The frightened person fights to regain control of his body and awaken again. He has to go through a long inner training to reach and learn to be comfortable in this inner state. The hypnotic state is probably closely related to the trance. In hypnosis, one is talked into and controlled by the hypnotist; in a

trance, the subject controls himself. To be able to induce a trance and to stay in it requires a great deal of learning and inner experience.

Since many fear inner states, it may be necessary to dispose of their relationship to madness or psychosis. Psychotic hallucinations are probably the spontaneous eruption into consciousness of trance and dreamlike material, implying that consciousness is weakened. In contrast to the capable seeker who deliberately enters a trance, the psychotic usually does not seek and cannot control the eruption of this material into awareness. There is probably a high correlation between the content of psychotic hallucinations and trancelike material. The difference is an impaired ego, not understanding or wanting these processes, in contrast to a healthy ego seeking to evoke inner processes. It is possible that exploration of these states could prevent madness because they give the individual keys to understanding what bothers him.

For the present, let us deal primarily with the hypnogogic state since it is more widely known and experienced than the deeper trances that Swedenborg explored even more extensively. It is curious that the hypnogogic state is still little known. There are many psychologists who know little of its existence, let alone its nature; but Jean-Paul Sartre explored it.<sup>4</sup>

On the way into sleep, one goes through a stage in which there is still some awareness of the self relaxing and the spinning out of inner ideas, fantasies, words or scenes. Similarly, on awakening in the morning, one can linger on the edge of inner imagery-fantasy while being partially awake. Those who really explore this state can linger for hours watching scenes and hearing things said. For unknown reasons, some people are primarily auditory, or hear things in this state, while others primarily see things. The deeper one goes into this state the more likely the experience will be both auditory and visual.

Herbert Silberer, writing two centuries after Swedenborg, noticed that this state is autosymbolic. In other words, whatever is true of the individual at that moment tends to be spontaneously represented or symbolized. For instance, I was meditating on the richness of the hypnogogic state and heard someone say “my liberal arts course.” The liberal arts course is a representation of my feeling that the inner is varied and informative. The comment is not immediately understood because I did not have the idea of liberal arts course in mind at that moment. These symbolic representations

come as a surprise, precisely like listening to someone else who thinks symbolically. This autosymbolic character is a real secret of this process. Even though he looked at the process for months, Sartre failed to notice this correlation. The inner can represent fleeting feelings or ideas so fast that the observer is hard put to recall what the feeling was a moment afterward.

Silberer gives a number of examples of this spontaneous symbolism from the hypnogogic state. He uses it to meditate on a problem much as Swedenborg did:

I think of human understanding probing into the foggy and difficult problem of the “mothers” (*Faust*, Part II).

Symbol: I stand alone on a stone jetty extending out far into a dark sea. The waters of the ocean and the dark and mysteriously heavy air unite at the horizon.

Interpretation: The jetty in the dark sea corresponds to the probing into the difficult problem. The union of air and water, the elimination of the distinction between above and below, should symbolize that, with the mothers, as Mephistopheles describes it, all times and places shade into each other so that there are no boundaries between here and there, above and below. It is in this sense that Mephistopheles says to Faust: “Now you may sink!—I could just as well say: rise.”

I decide to dissuade someone from carrying out a dangerous resolution. I want to tell him, “If you do that, grave misfortune will befall you.”

Symbol: I see three gruesome-looking riders on black horses storming by over a dusky field under leaden skies.<sup>5</sup>

A host of experiences is possible in this state. One can watch feelings arise and gradually clarify themselves into phrases or sentences or scenes. It immediately becomes apparent that the mind can think without any apparent effort. In fact, without the interference of the little self, it thinks faster, clearer, and more richly. For instance, I was half asleep in the morning and sleepily watched the inner process. It was coming and going as I rose out of sleep and then fell back again. I lapsed into a feeling of understanding. Suddenly I heard “between, I heard the understood.” “Between” in a single word captures this coming and going process. “I heard” reflects that the experience is primarily auditory. “I heard the understood” reflects back that I am hearing words that reflect the feeling of understanding. The order of the phrase is correct too. I heard; then I understood since hearing this sentence comes before its understanding. In ordinary thinking, one can feel and anticipate what is coming next. In the hypnogogic state, something is said or seen before there is any possibility of understanding what it means. One can have many of these inner experiences that are difficult to understand at all. For instance, I heard

“anzeema.” The best I could guess was that this name accurately represented feelings, but the feeling and how it matched the word was lost. It is also characteristic of this state that a great deal is artfully condensed into a sentence or a scene. Whatever the source of this process, it seems to think with lightning speed in a rich, symbolic way.

One morning while slowly waking, I saw a striking painting in somber tones of gray, blue, and black, depicting a rough landscape rising from plains on the left to rough rocky mountains on the right. Dramatically superimposed on the center of the painting was a rounded, black number 5. The feeling was peaceful yet powerfully mystical. I have many associations, yet the meaning is far from clear. From the depths came a painting representative of me that said more than I could immediately grasp. It was momentous and portentous of I know not what. The whole hypnogogic state has this characteristic, as though one is dealing with what lies over the edge of consciousness and the understanding.

Swedenborg described the hypnogogic state thus:

But different is the vision which comes when one is in full wakefulness, with the eyes closed. This is such that things are seen as though in clear day. Nay, there is still another kind of vision which comes in a state midway between sleep and wakefulness. The man then supposes that he is fully awake, as it were, inasmuch as all his senses are active. Another vision is that between the time of sleep and the time of wakefulness, when the man is waking up, and has not yet shaken off sleep from his eyes. This is the sweetest of all, for heaven then operates into his rational mind in the utmost tranquility.

*Word Explained §7387*

My own experience agrees with Swedenborg's. The hypnogogic experiences while awakening seem to represent tranquility and a deeper understanding than those found on the way into sleep. The painting I mention above is an example.

The following were Swedenborg's hypnogogic experiences:

. . . I acknowledged that I was impure, head to foot. I cried for the mercy of Jesus Christ. Then it seem that the words “I, poor sinful creature” occurred to me. . . .

*Dream Diary §85*

This looks clearly autosymbolic.

It was said: *Nicolaiter*, and *Nicolaus Nicolai*—if this refers to my new name, I do not know.

Later Swedenborg comes closer to what it may mean:

Nicolaus Nicolai was a philosopher who every year sent loaves of bread to Augustus.

*Spiritual Diary* §134

The meaning of the comment is hidden in this association. Again, the hypnogogic is speaking from beyond consciousness and its message is not always clear. It sometimes adds a humorous comment as in the following: “Thus, as to pleasure, wealth, and rank, which I had pursued, I perceived that all was vanity and that he is the more happy who is devoid of such things. . . . I seemed to hear a hen cackling, as she does when she has laid an egg” (*Dream Diary* §165). The inner self humorously comments on the insight Swedenborg has just laid. But the chicken is not a very bright animal, and she is awfully proud of her new creation. Foolish vanity and pride are being reflected, along with the discovery of creation. Humor is common in the hypnogogic state, which often displays a wry character, as though someone is looking down on one’s little acts. Like Swedenborg, I often wrestle with ultimates. One morning while I was in the process of awakening, someone said, “Here is a mondo for you,” and I opened my eyes to see the world. A “mondo” is a Japanese Zen term for a problem given by a master to plague the student in a productive way. My higher self was playing with me, saying, “You want a problem from your master? Here is a little one. Existence itself!” It is a joke but serious at the same time, which makes it seriously funny.

One doesn’t explore these things for long without beginning to feel there is a greater wisdom in the inner processes than there is in ordinary consciousness. Swedenborg was beginning to trust this inner wisdom:

It seemed to be said *Interiorescit* [he is becoming more internal], *Integratur* [he is being made whole], which signifies that, by my infestations, I am becoming more purified.

*Dream Diary* §170

At this point, Swedenborg was still working all hours day and night on the last of his anatomical works, while noting down these inner experiences:

This was a Sunday. Before I fell asleep I was thinking very hard on what I am writing at the moment, and then it was said to me: "Shut up! Or I'll beat you!" Then, I saw somebody sitting on ice, and I was scared. . . . This means that I should not persist in my work so long, especially not on Sundays, or perhaps in the evenings.

*Dream Diary* §242

Swedenborg had to get a message from the beyond to suggest that he shouldn't work on Sunday evenings! At the time, he was writing on "Organic Forms in General" in volume II of *The Animal Kingdom*. Looking at this book, the reader would be inclined to agree with this inner process; he should hold his tongue. He is in a cold, precarious place trying to analyze everything under the sun. The inner threatens to punish him; he is naturally afraid, for it has done so before.

The hypnogogic is just one of a series of inner states that became guides to Swedenborg. Later we will see his dreams, visions, and other numinous experiences. I want to emphasize his meditation and hypnogogic states because they are normal experiences available to anyone, and there are several critical discoveries that anyone who explores these states will make. Swedenborg found them, and they profoundly affected his later thinking. He was, after all, an empirical scientist. He believed what he could concretely see and deal with. I would assert that no one can explore these states in any depth without making the following discoveries which are basic to understanding Swedenborg's later work.

1. *The individual's sphere, in which he rules within his mind, is relatively small.* Waking consciousness normally blocks out the other inner psychic processes. Swedenborg was later to say that it is a gift from God that a man or woman even feels as if she rules herself. No one can spend hours in meditation trying to hold her thoughts still without beginning to suspect she isn't master of her own mind. The average person would find it very difficult to steadily hold one thought, image, or intention in mind for one minute. In the hypnogogic state, one can watch thoughts form and be spoken without one's behest. Further, the inner process thinks far faster and more cleverly than the meditator and the symbolic language spoken may not even be understood. Those who have explored these states come to feel like a vessel into which life is poured. Moreover, after much watching of thoughts coming forth on their own, one can detect the same process in normal waking consciousness. One learns to recognize auditory hallucinations and other dreamlike processes in normal consciousness. The

little fringe thought that pops into one's head in the daytime is no longer seen as one's own creation. The same process occurs near sleep. Only very logical, labored thought feels like one's own, and even here a careful examination will show bursts of intuition and a guidance by background feelings whose source is unknown. Some will be frightened by the idea that there is little that we actually rule in our mind. But this is the normal, common state. We are some kind of coming-and-going, flowing life process. The main effect of watching this coming and going is a greater humility about how much one is master of and a greater tolerance for others as their whims come and go.

Swedenborg became decidedly humble as he went within and watched these processes. The proud author of many scientific works didn't feel he had the right to put his name on his psychological-theological works. Through most of his later life, these, his greatest works, were issued anonymously. It was apparent to him that, if he did anything of worth, it had been given to him by a power beyond himself. This is not a piously assumed humility. It came because he had seen too much formed beyond him and given to him. He saw that, even though we are given to feel master of ourselves, any close examination of these inner processes belies this. Life is given to us. What we call our self is this point of giving.

2. *The capacity to symbolize or represent is a natural one, reflecting some higher understanding within the individual.* For many years, Swedenborg explored this symbolic inner capacity. From uncertain beginnings in working out his dreams, he grew into a very rich and sure understanding of this symbolism. A dream symbol could be construed to mean this, that, or anything else, depending on one's predilections. In meditation and the hypnogogic state, the individual can watch symbols form. By looking at feelings, associations, and the situation being autosymbolized, it is possible to penetrate the symbol. These states instruct in the matter of symbolism. One gradually feels that the symbol is the means by which something higher and more interior speaks to the conscious self. It is an intelligent guidance system. Since it is in a higher language than we are accustomed to, the searcher needs to enter into this inner realm to understand its language.

Swedenborg later described this symbolism as correspondences and representations. All orders of existence correspond to each other, just as the expression on his or her face corresponds to the person's feeling. The



lower-level correspondent represents the higher level, just as the facial expression represents the inner mood and feeling. For Swedenborg, this is the key to understanding all levels of existence. One cannot see the present relevance of heaven or hell without this key, which is difficult to apply and requires great intimacy to use it well. One cannot explore these states without beginning to sense the wonder and power of the inner that speaks to one in this higher language.

I was teaching the interpretation of dreams to a counselor. We both sensed her main problem. She was too voluble, spoke easily of anything, but felt little. While passing me in the hall, she said she dreamed of a blind mole in the ground. She could see that she was like the blind mole feeling her way in the dark, but why did he speak Spanish? I said, "Fancy talker, your silly mole," and she saw this representation of her own capacity for fancy talk while she was a lowly blind creature. In this playful, creative way, the inner reflects the truth of us. It cannot do otherwise. Jung calls this inner state the objective. It can't help but accurately represent. Since the truth it represents is greater than our ordinary understanding, its language is richer than we are accustomed to.

3. *These inner states raise the issue of the presence of other spiritual beings interacting in our lives.* It is at first disconcerting to hear others speaking inside one's head. But hypnogogic and dream visions aren't so bad. After all, the mind that visualizes might go on picturing things even when the eyes aren't in use. But hearing things not wholly understood gives one the feeling of the presence of other beings. I stress that these auditory hallucinations are quite normal and common in this state. They differ from psychotic hallucinations not so much in content but in the circumstances. The psychotic hallucination occurs in a disturbed person in the waking state and is clear and distinct. Hypnogogic hallucinations are delicate and faint, requiring an inward state with little ego awareness to even awaken them.

Times have changed since Emanuel Swedenborg explored these areas. His father, the bishop, had heard and seen angels; it was part of his calling. During Swedenborg's time, there was a rash of spirit possession in Sweden. When he heard and saw things, he naturally thought of spirits. Now we experience the same phenomena and think they must be pieces of the self, bits of the unconscious coming up. For the present, I would simply like to leave the issue open. One may be experiencing bits of the self or disincarnate entities, or these two may be fundamentally the same thing.

Eventually Swedenborg saw them as the same thing. It is enough for the present to say experiences in these states suggest the presence of spirits interacting in our innermost feelings.

It was said later that Swedenborg the scientist changed into a mystic. This isn't quite true. Swedenborg the empirical scientist remained a scientist reporting his findings even when he went within, but he took an unusual and direct path to the underpinnings of human experience itself, stirring up findings that still need explaining. The essential pattern of his findings is already implied at this level. The rest of the journey inward was not so easy, for he entered into a mighty struggle with inner forces.

It might be asked whether it was an advantage or disadvantage for Swedenborg to explore inward long before psychology and psychoanalysis came along to "explain everything." It was a disadvantage in that he described what so few understood, but an advantage was that he had no chaos of theories or opinions to distort his vision. He could describe things just as he found them. He even felt that divine guidance suggested he shouldn't read the theologies of others since they would introduce too many errors for him to work through. Being among the first to explore the inner landscape, without the guidance of theories, he was thrown back on describing things just as he found them. He felt free to look at what the later morass of theory would suggest he should avoid. Fundamentally, Swedenborg chose to examine inner processes in the most direct way possible.

## OPENING THE INNER WORLD



IN 1744 SWEDENBORG WAS STILL WORKING ON THE LAST of his scientific works. His four volumes on the brain were a brilliant breakthrough, throwing light on operations of the brain that were to be appreciated only centuries later. He was also doing a very perceptive, although still rather intellectual, work on psychology. His outer life was eminently successful and productive. Yet he had failed in his quest to find the soul through science. This quest was more serious and important than anyone would have guessed. In a kind of mid-life crisis, he was called away from his outer success to attempt the impossible through the inner search. He had had a taste of the inward journey, and he took it up more and more seriously. In his intense meditation, he began to find deeper processes. Symbols arose. Instead of just occasionally jotting down dreams, he began to record and interpret them daily.

Swedenborg's *Dream Diary* has come down to us almost by accident. He wrote many things he did not intend to publish, and this was one of them. Writing in his personal journal, he was quite honest with himself. The first dream notes are brief, but they imply a struggle that will become more apparent:

In Leipzig, on one lying in boiling water.

About one who stumbled with a chain into the depths.

*Dream Diary §11*

I was standing by a machine which was moved by a wheel; its spokes entangled me more and more and carried me up so that I could not escape. I awoke. [It signifies] either that I need to be kept in further difficulty, or else that it concerned the lungs in the womb, on which subject I then wrote immediately afterwards; both.

*Dream Diary §18*

For the reader who has examined dreams, these are not unusual. They reflect some inner stress but to a normal extent. As Swedenborg went inward, however, he was being lifted up as though by a machine. Unsure of the direction, he didn't feel safe. Since his thinking and writing occupied his whole life, it is not surprising that he related dreams to his work. The wheel's shape may well have been associated with fetal lungs for him. But he wisely saw a deeper meaning: he was being carried along in a dilemma. We can only guess at its meaning. Above all else, he wanted to know what was true. But in these dreams, he sensed he was being carried off in some unknown direction in a world of strange fancies. Later he found that the lungs and respiration have to do with understanding. His fetal understanding became more and more involved and carried up by this inner process; he could no longer escape from it.

Other dreams comment on some sort of impurity in himself.

I was in an herb garden containing many fine beds, one of which I desired to own. I looked around to see if there was any other path; I saw one and thought of another. There was someone who was picking away a heap of invisible creeping things and killed them; he said they were bugs that someone had carried thither and thrown in, infesting the entire place. I did not see them, but saw some other crawling creature, which I dropped on a white linen cloth beside a woman; it was the impurity which ought to be rooted out of me.

*Dream Diary §19*

A paraphrase of this dream (and any dream) helps reveal its meaning. "I want something nice and beautiful. I see an escape, but I am ambivalent about which way to go. There are invisible vermin around. I am responsible for some of the impurity which is associated with a woman."

King Charles was sitting in a dark room and said something, but somewhat indistinctly; afterwards asked one at the table if he had not received the information he had asked for, and he replied "Yes." Then he shut the windows, and I helped him with the curtains. Afterwards, I mounted a horse, but did not take the road I had intended but went across hills and mountains, riding rapidly. I had a full cartload in tow that I could not get rid of, and

eventually the horse got exhausted by the burden and I wanted to get him into some stage; he came in, and he became like a slaughtered, blood-red beast, fallen down. . . .

*Dream Diary* §31

Again, a paraphrase: “A higher being can’t get through to me. He and I close off the light. I am not going the way I intended. Though fast, I pull such a load as to kill me.” He was still working hard on his scientific writing, and he pulled such a load. The higher one hadn’t gotten through to him, and the light was shut out. His own interpretation conformed closely to this.

Swedenborg’s dreams at this time were trying to pull him away from his excessive intellectual and scientific work. Though mildly complimentary, they said it really was a heap of rubbish. He partly missed and partly saw this message. He also felt full of vermin, filth, unworthiness. He knew he needed help, but he only partly saw it coming. He was very religious; this whole process was cast in a religious framework. There was evil in him that should be rooted out. But how? He had shut off his own feelings, and in dreams he didn’t get along well with women, who represent feelings. He was wary of women-feelings. Maybe they would lead him astray.

Most of us live so far from an age in which one fights evil temptations that it is worth commenting on this as a psychological process. To fight evil temptations sounds precisely like trying to repress and deny a part of the self, like the opposite of integrating these tendencies. Actually, it is integrative in its own way. The person fighting temptations becomes very much aware of his or her other side; one can’t fight demons for long without feeling how alive one is in one’s self.

When these dreams were first published many years after his death, Swedenborg’s detractors leapt on his sexual dreams as though they showed he was some sort of sex fiend. I would like to deal with this sexual side, for it bears directly on the central drama of his struggles. It also illuminates how fighting temptations can help integrate the other side of one’s self. Also, in the sexual aspects of his dreams, his humanness shows through particularly well.

Swedenborg’s early detractors surely had not looked at their own dreams, for they would have seen much more sex than Swedenborg shows in his. Out of some 250 dreams, nine—comparatively few—show a recognizable sexual theme, in accord with his statement early in the *Dream Diary*: “how the inclination toward women, which had been my chief

passion, so suddenly ceased” (§14). This former passion for women comes as something of a surprise to anyone who pursued Swedenborg’s earlier history and writings, for it wasn’t apparent. There were hints that he had arranged his life so he didn’t see women alone. Now in his fifties, passion was calming down. More than this, it could well be that the need for women was in effect the feeling side saying, “Relax, live, enjoy yourself as other men do.” But his life-style was relatively spartan, self-denying and self-demanding. It could also be that his passion for women finally diminished because he was clearly going within. He was going to meet feeling in all its forms, and so didn’t need the external attraction to call him back to feeling.

The earliest sexual dream represented the difficulty he was having with his soft, feeling side:

I lay with one who was not beautiful, but whom I liked. She had what others have, and there I touched her; but, in front, there seemed to be some set of teeth; it appeared to be Archenholtz in a woman’s shape. What this means I don’t know, perhaps that I should not touch any woman or get deeply involved in politics or something like that.

*Dream Diary §120*

Swedenborg was puzzled, as well he might be. The idea of the *vagina dentata*, the vagina with teeth, was something psychoanalysts were to run into much later. The same theme turned up again in dream §261. A paraphrase clarifies what is involved: “I am relaxing alongside something soft and pleasant. It attracts me, although it isn’t beautiful. I want to join with this softness, but I cannot be comfortable with it. We (I am) are in doubt about what it is.” We can’t be sure of Swedenborg’s associations with his friend Johan Archenholtz. Like Swedenborg, this man had opposed Sweden’s going to war with Russia and had been tortured for his beliefs. Archenholtz, one who was ready to suffer for his beliefs, seemed to think it was a female form. Swedenborg, another ready to suffer for his beliefs, was attracted to soft, warm feeling, but he couldn’t get along with it. This theme turns up repeatedly in the dreams. He was not against love-women-feeling, but he had not come to terms with this side of himself yet. He was struggling mightily to put down sex-feeling/corporeal thoughts. Right after the only clear sexual intercourse dream, this follows:

Then, I dropped off a little, and there seemed to be a flow of oil with some mustard mixed with it, which should be my future life, where there appears to be some amenity blended with adversity or something that is healing to me. . . .

*Dream Diary §173*

After sex, oil flows, which signifies something sensual, smooth, and pleasant. But it is mixed with something sharp in taste. Feeling has been released in the inner world, but with it comes a little note of warning, the mustard seed. We have the advantage of seeing all the subsequent events. Swedenborg was correct; he was to know pleasantness mixed with adversity. This was his medicine, designed by this inner process.

The next night this dream appeared:

I was all the night, for some eleven hours, neither asleep nor awake, in a strange trance-like state, being aware of all I dreamed, my thoughts being tied up tensely, which intermittently made me sweat. That kind of sleep I cannot describe, during which my double thoughts were separated as it were and torn to pieces.

*Dream Diary §174*

(One of the quickest and surest ways to awaken the inner life is to deny bodily pleasure. This is probably why visions are rare these days.) Swedenborg fell into a trance. He could not control his thoughts. Doubling of thought is relatively rare: each thought arises with its own opposite, creating friction. The mental sphere is torn apart with the energy generated. One is primarily experiencing feeling; thought is a helpless pawn. The world of feeling explodes internally and tears apart thought. There is no safe refuge for the beset person. He hangs on, hoping to weather the storm. Swedenborg was indeed to experience pleasantness mixed with adversity. On both scores, in pleasantness and in adversity, he was being educated in the world of feeling. If he had just relaxed and lived out his sexual needs, this would have been much less likely to happen. His heroic combat against passion and all corporeal temptations meant that he was going to experience more feeling than most. *The Spiritual Diary*, which followed the *Dream Diary*, is shot through with awesome feeling and experience. The cold, clear intellect that would retreat to a block of ice was being melted by its own heroic effort to find the real truth.

A married woman wanted to have me, but I liked an unmarried one. The former got angry and chased me, but I nevertheless gained the unmarried one and was with her and loved her. . . .

There was a woman, who had a very beautiful estate in which we walked about and whom I was going to marry. Was *pietas* [piety], and moreover, I believe, *sapientia* [wisdom], which owned these possessions. And I was also with her and loved her . . . , which seemed to stand for the marriage proper.

*Dream Diary §§178–179*

To paraphrase, “I reject the improper, so it torments me. I accept and love the greatness of what is beautiful and proper. With this I can join.”

Swedenborg’s struggle against corporeal feeling and temptation awakened an assault of feeling, with which he was just coming to terms. He could accept what was proper and would reject what seemed improper. He was involved in a personal analysis, as at least one analyst noticed.<sup>1</sup> This is the way analysis should go; the individual chooses what is right and proper for him or her. If he simply accepts everything that comes from within, he dissolves in the depth and becomes its pawn. He is no longer cutting off feeling, but driving it to a higher level of sublimation. For instance, in Kundalini Yoga, the root of life is represented by a serpent that lives coiled at the base of the spine. If this serpent is allowed to escape easily as sexual impulse, which is handy to where he lives, the yogi doesn’t discover his higher possibilities. The snake simply appears as a sex drive. The adept becomes very aware of the serpent Kundalini and forces him to rise up the spine. If he must get out, it will be at the highest level, the mind. As Kundalini escapes out of the mind, it shatters the individual’s conventional ideas of reality, and the serpent becomes the Divine itself. This possibility could not be discovered unless all the lower escapes were blocked. By wrestling with corporeal thoughts and evil temptations, Swedenborg generated a tense struggle to instruct him on the power and reality of feeling. By accepting only the highest aspect of feeling, he was driving it to show him its highest possibilities. Kundalini was to escape only through his mind.

It is characteristic of a dream series or a personal analysis that the person doesn’t show a simple linear progress. The line of progress is complex, like a spiral that shows cyclic ups and downs during a gradual rise of the overall trend. The 286 entries in the *Dream Diary* show such a progress. Many times Swedenborg sensed himself as unworthy or ignorant, yet the level of his understanding gradually increased. From a first, halting use of symbols, he became accustomed to this language and could even describe himself in symbolic terms. Over and over, the theme of temptation reappears. It means he had awakened some inner potentiality and had to struggle with its power, while he became more powerful. At times, he describes this process as infestation—a struggle with alien forces opposed to the individual:



While I was in the first assault of evil temptations, I cried to Jesus for help, and it went away; I also kept my hands folded under my head, and then it did not return a second time. I was, nevertheless, in tremors when I awoke, and now and then I heard a dull sound, but I do not know where it came from.

*Dream Diary §98*

The tremors imply that the inner forces are strong and the controls are taxed. The struggle is very real. It even has a physical side to it. He referred to swoons and fainting fits (*Dream Diary §282*). This is no minor intellectual struggle. Double thoughts were reported several times, where he would experience thought and its opposite without control. This was part of the enlivening of the whole inner sphere. It was also part of the medicine he needed, to learn that he couldn't control everything.

Then he also had periods of ecstasy:

I had a preternaturally good and long sleep for twelve hours. On awakening, I had before me Jesus crucified and his cross. The spiritual came upon me with all its heavenly, almost ecstatic life, and I was ascending so high and permitted to go higher and higher, that had I proceeded, I would have been dissolved by this veritable life of joy.

*Dream Diary §127*

The ecstatic respites between storms assured Swedenborg that he was on the right track. The storms were like seas of feeling tossing him about, teaching him his smallness. His pride in his own powers became less and less. There were several experiences of God. He suspected from the beginning that the higher, wiser, symbolic power within him might stem from God. This poor, beset vessel of a man had several confirming experiences that encouraged him to go on with his terrible struggle. They came from all directions—they were not just dream experiences. The following clearly shows the respite quality of these religious experiences; it is also a complex of experiences.

At ten o'clock, I went to bed and felt a little better. After half an hour, I heard some din under my head, and then I thought that the tempter left. Immediately a shiver came over me, starting from the head and spreading throughout the body, with some rumbling, coming in waves, and I realized that something holy had befallen me.

Whereupon I went to sleep, and about twelve o'clock, or perhaps it was at one or two in the morning, such a strong shivering seized me, from my head to my feet, as a thunder produced by several clouds colliding, shaking me beyond description and prostrating me. And when I was prostrated in this way, I was clearly awake and saw how I was overthrown.

I wondered what this was supposed to mean, and I spoke as if awake but found that the words were put into my mouth. I said, "Oh, thou almighty Jesus Christ, who of thy great

mercy deignest to come to so great a sinner, make me worthy of this grace!" and I clasped my hands and prayed. Then a hand emerged, which pressed my hands firmly.

. . . In the same moment, I was sitting in his bosom and beheld him face to face, a countenance of a holy mien. All was such that I cannot describe. He was smiling at me, and I was convinced that he looked like this when he was alive. He spoke to me and asked if I have a health certificate; and to this I replied, "Lord, thou knowest better than I. "He said, "Well, then do!"—that is, as I inwardly grasped this, "Do love me" or "Do as promised."

*Dream Diary §§51–54*

The struggling man finally had a clear confirmation that he was on the right track. It is curious that the Lord spoke to Swedenborg symbolically when he asked about a health certificate. This may have referred in part to an earlier event in Swedenborg's life. He had sailed to England at the time that England was fighting the plague, and it was a stormy voyage. He landed without a health certificate, for which the authorities nearly hanged him. So the Lord asks him if he is now clean enough to come ashore from the dangerous sea. Swedenborg no longer presumed to judge his spiritual health. He left it up to the Lord, who answered graciously. The promise was that Swedenborg would give up all his scientific work and devote himself to this inner journey or the will of the innermost. He hadn't fully come into compliance with it yet, but he was being prepared for this radical shift in direction. Though intrigued by this inner process, he still set great store by his scientific work. He didn't fully sense that this inner journey would be of such importance that his great scientific work would be like a heap of rubbish in comparison.

This dream occurred not long after the above experience:

Obnoxious dreams, about dogs who were said to be my compatriots and who licked my neck but did not bite. . . . In the morning, I fell into appalling thoughts, as also during the day, that the Evil One had taken possession of me, yet with the trust that he was outside and would soon let me go.

When I was in damnable thoughts, the worst that could be, I was in that very moment strongly presented with the inward sight of Jesus Christ and the operation of the Holy Spirit set upon me, so that eventually I knew that the devil was gone. The next day I was now and then in a state of infestation and in double thoughts and in strife; after dinner, I was mostly in a calm mood and thought of God, although I was busy with worldly things. Then I set out for Leiden.

*Dream Diary §§167–168*

It is rare to see a clear mixing of dreams, psychological analysis, and religious processes. The theme of dogs comes up several times in Swedenborg's dreams. If the reader feels what it is like to have an animal

licking the neck—a dog that might bite—the meaning can be recovered. The dogs were said to be his countrymen, that is, his associates. Everything in the dream has to be part of himself. To paraphrase, “I have the feeling of some sloppy beast getting near my head.” This fits with thoughts of the Evil One possessing him. Yet the danger from the Evil One is only partial since he is outside and will let go; the dog did not bite. Swedenborg was still struggling with his instincts (that is, his countrymen) that were confounding his thoughts. In the midst of this, Christ appeared again, and he was saved. The next day he went about his worldly duties and even made a trip to Leiden, probably to see his scientific works through the press.

Some readers will easily be able to accept that God can be in the midst of the innermost processes of mind. Others will see this as just wishful thinking or some other kind of folly. Whether or not God is there, consider for a moment the psychological value of thinking of the innermost processes in these terms. Whatever is in a person is decidedly powerful and very clever. It is powerful enough to overwhelm the individual and destroy him or her, as in psychosis. Swedenborg later described this process as quite dangerous, and analysts would agree. After one holy tremor or vision by a patient, many psychiatrists would be inclined to administer a drug to dampen down these inner processes. It was important that Swedenborg had a set of values and struggled against inner tendencies that he did not consider acceptable. He did not rejoice at every instinct that turned up, yet his overall feeling toward this outpouring of inner processes was positive. His belief that the inner could contain God had several useful functions. He would look to it as a sincere man searching after God, which meant he would be patient in exploring these processes when most religious people would not have bothered. But along with God, there could be other spirits. He would have to sort out the outpourings of this inner region, for not all would be acceptable. Both his scientific attitude and his clear, strong personal values helped him in this difficult process.

In Eastern religions, it is often recommended that one not attempt this exploration until one has reached maturity and most of life’s problems are solved. The values of the adolescent are still too fluid to withstand the storm of the inner journey. This is not to say that strong values are not changed by the inward journey, but a set of values, a clear stance in the world, provides a stronger vessel to weather the storm. Whether or not God is within, this provides a suitable approach to the inner, implying that inside

there is great power, wisdom, and danger. God also represents the highest conception of what one hopes to find. Things should be very much different and better on reaching this inner potential.

Swedenborg had several precognitive dreams. Glimpses of one's own future in dreams are not unusual, for most people have such dreams.<sup>2</sup> The difficulty lies in penetrating the symbolism of dreams and then in knowing which ones predict and which merely speak of one's present state. It is curious to see what the dream process would care to tell of Swedenborg's future:

Furthermore something was told about my book. It was said that it would be a *Liber divinus de Dei cultu et amore* [a divine book on the worship and love of God]; I believe there was also something about *spiritibus* [spirits]. I thought I had something on the subject in my work *De Infinito*, but there was no answer as to that. . . .

*Dream Diary* §250

At the time he didn't know it, but shortly after this, Swedenborg started on a book whose title is given in the dream, *The Worship and Love of God*. It was a strange work for him, a flaming example of poetic imagination unlike anything he had ever done before, an exercise in a totally new style and conception, making a break with his intellectual work and presaging the soaring quality of his later works. In this dream, he wonders if he had not written on this already in *The Infinite and Final Cause of Creation (De Infinito)*. The dream didn't answer, but the answer is no. His conception of what the dream was talking about was too limited. It was a totally new work that would rise into consciousness and would have some bearing on spirits.

The next precognitive dream is significant in that it describes the most important aspect of his future life. Swedenborg missed its real meaning altogether, for he could not grasp its predictive quality. Instead, he again thought it referred to a past work:

I saw the gable of the most beautiful palace that anyone could see, and the center of it was shining like the sun. I was told that it had been resolved in the society that I was to become a member, an immortal one, which nobody had ever been before, with the exception of one who had been dead and lived; but some said there were others. Then, the thought occurred to me whether the most important thing is not to be with God and thus to live. This, therefore, was about that which I had just then brought to a finish concerning organic forms in general and especially the conclusion.

*Dream Diary* §243

Swedenborg had a special feeling for the gable end of a palace: he had used the symbol before. It sounds as though the symbol means, “I am in an ideal place.” Much of what he reported here as a dream was really a simple statement of fact. It had been resolved in heaven that he could visit; he would be permitted what had been given to no one else before their death. While living, he was to be permitted to visit heaven and hell. The sun in the midst of the palace he would find again in the center of heaven. “Some said there were others”; indeed, the others were the multitudes of all that had ever lived. The thought of the importance of being with God was also part of it. In heaven and hell, Swedenborg would know God. The ushering into heaven and hell would take place in several months. His inner search and battles were beginning to pay off. I have no idea why the dream mechanism would bring a nugget like this without also giving the individual the means to understand the precious information, but it happens often. The inner provides ample messages, and it is up to the individual to determine their meaning.

There are many signs that Swedenborg was beginning to experience the inner in more than just dreams. The process had become extraordinarily enlivened. Most people who have tried the same practices, even on a casual level, are inclined to have visions and intense emotional experiences.<sup>3</sup> In Swedenborg’s case, this was probably a product of his intense concentration, his yogic practice, his ability to devote himself to these processes, and his great need to encounter the Divine. Most people in personal analysis would prefer to keep the lid on inner processes. But Swedenborg was engaged in a heroic effort toward an encounter with higher inner processes. He was moving about as fast as one could hope in this inner sphere without breaking himself in the process. The main part of the *Dream Diary* covers only seven months; seven years would not be slow for such gains. No wonder the dreams referred to him as getting around fast.

In part, Swedenborg was bent upon bringing these discoveries into his life, though one might have expected a much more detached, intellectual approach to inner processes. He loved real, solid truths. He was rather pleased when a religious vision knocked him off his bed. A later vision that didn’t accomplish as much he concluded must have come from lower-order creatures! This was a man who enjoyed grappling with truth. After so many years of thinking and speculating on what was true, it apparently comforted him to be knocked about by lively truths that were greater than he: this is

what he had been looking for, sizable truth, truths as big as life itself. The liveliness of this inner encounter apparently did not scare him as much as it did others, reading of it later, who speculated on his sanity. He was overjoyed at finding truth so real. His main fear was that he was unworthy to advance in this realm, and his battle with feeling or corporeal thoughts was secondary to this.

In addition to several periods of religious ecstasy sprinkled among his inward battles, Swedenborg also experienced several visions, which were simply further signs that the forces he was dealing with were spilling over into his life. The visions occurred relatively late in the dream series. The inner battles were settling, and the visions were further guides to him that he was on the way: “When I woke up, I had a vision, seeing a lot of gold before me and the air full [of the gold]. This means that our Lord, who disposes all things, gives me all that I need of spiritual and worldly things. . . .” (*Dream Diary* §222). This vision probably occurred in the hypnogogic state. The next vision touches again on the kernel of the problem: “In a vision, I saw, as it were, a fire in coal pit, burning intensely, which signified *ignem amoris* [the fire of love]. . . .” (*Dream Diary* §261). A dream followed with the *vagina dentata* in it. The theme of desirable but dangerous to touch was in both the vision of “a fire in a coal pit, burning intensely,” and in the associated sexual image:

Moreover, I saw in a vision how beautiful loaves of bread were presented to me on a plate, which was a premonition that the Lord himself was going to instruct me, since I have now finally come into such a state that I know nothing, and that all *preconcepta judicia* [preconceived opinions, biases] have been taken away from me, which is the beginning of learning, namely, that one first must become a child, and then be nurtured into knowledge, as is now, I think, happening to me.

*Dream Diary* §267

Clearly, Swedenborg took seriously the ceremonial use of bread in church. He was honored by this vision of beautiful loaves of bread, believing that he was being instructed by the Lord, the highest bread he could hope for. Although he was really beginning to grasp the whole inner language and trend, he clearly saw himself as ignorant in this sphere. “I know nothing. . . .” Preconceived opinions had been taken away from him. For instance, he no longer related these inner messages to his scientific work. He was in new territory where he was, as it were, an infant being wet-nursed—a soft and feelingful image. He is using the inner symbolic

language to describe himself: “In a vision, there was a person who was carrying a heavy burden. He was carrying wooden planks and fell down under his burden. Another person came to his rescue, but in what manner he was helped up I did not see” (*Dream Diary* §269). This sounds like an image of the struggling Christ—a man carrying planks falls down and is helped. Yet, since it is an image fashioned out of Swedenborg, it must reflect him, who was also struggling under a burden that was too much for him, except for unseen help.

The next vision is likely also from the hypnogogic state. It combines two major themes that he had been struggling with in his dreams: “In the morning, there appeared to me in a vision the market held as Disting in my father’s house at Uppsala, in the parlor upstairs, at the entrance, and everywhere” (*Dream Diary* §281). The associations here are too private to be readily understood. The Disting fair was an annual festival—dedicated to female deities—held since pagan times in February in Uppsala, Sweden. The implication is that Swedenborg’s difficulty with women-feelings-the corporeal had been settled. From ancient times, the mysteries of the feminine had been celebrated, and now it occurs again in Swedenborg. He had been raised in Uppsala, where his main and somewhat limited contact with his austere bishop father took place. That the fair takes place in his “father’s house”—and indeed in the parlor and all over the house—implies that it was acceptable to his father. The vision says that some kind of joyous acceptance of the feminine had taken place and that this would be acceptable to his father. But note that, although sex is implied here (female deities), it is on a high plane. The sublimation Swedenborg strove for in relating to sex-women-feeling had succeeded; now he could accept the feminine in terms of its highest implications. Hence, he projected in a vision the celebration of female deities. In several prior dreams, Swedenborg seemed to be working on his differences with his father. The bishop wanted Emanuel to be a religious man and appeared somewhat disappointed when he chased after the current fad, science. This difference with his father became resolved as Swedenborg gradually turned into an actively religious man.

This same resolution of his struggle with the feminine-feeling aspects of his own inner life shows rather touchingly in his last entry in the *Dream Diary*. This time he was just thinking and stating his position, but he was thinking in terms of the symbolism of the inner world and was clearly

dealing with delicate feeling. He had come a long way from the rational scientist who set out to find the soul:

Verities or virgins of this genius think it ignominious to offer themselves for sale. They esteem themselves so precious, so dear to their admirers, that they show indignation if anyone take liberty to suggest an affair, and even more if anyone attempts to purchase them. To others, who think they are bad, they lift their eyebrows.

Rather than being undervalued by the former and lay themselves open to the contempt of the latter, they accordingly offer themselves gratuitously [*gratis*] to their lovers [*amatoribus*] I [*Ego*], who am their *famulus* [servant], would not dare to disobey them, for fear of being deprived of the service [*famulatio*].

*Dream Diary* §287

The image of verities or truths coming as lovely virgins is a very old one, going back to Greek mythology and further. Swedenborg had had a classical education and knew this. The image combines truth and feeling into one. These vestal virgins were within. He was speculating on how one could have one of these women; they couldn't be bought. Moreover, they are not to be seen as just low, sexual seducers—there is a real danger that these virgins will be misunderstood. The real secret is simple: they give themselves freely to their lover. Swedenborg acknowledged that he was their servant and lover; he could but obey them. The earlier struggle with women-sex-feeling-corporeal thoughts was now resolved. He had found wonder in himself that combined truth and deep feeling. He was a servant of this wonder. All the rest of his writing combined intense feeling and truth, a central theme running all through his discoveries of heaven and hell. He could not have penetrated further unless he had truly accepted his own feeling side.

Many will think—and indeed a Jungian analyst expressed it<sup>4</sup>—that Swedenborg had not really accepted his feeling side because it was constrained into vestal virgins, lovely repressed images, not the usual way of accepting and acting out feelings. However, I believe firmly that, in dealing with the private matters of another man's inner life, we should try to understand and accept him *on his own terms*. For instance, Mann, the Jungian analyst, examined the *Dream Diary* and asked if Swedenborg had become integrated in Jungian terms. But it did not matter in the least to Swedenborg whether he had become integrated. He was looking for and finding God. This was his whole purpose and the whole measure of success. Some would also suspect that Swedenborg merely dodged and displaced his



sexual needs by this talk of verities and virgins. But the man chose his own values. He decided to block the lowest bodily expression of feeling that he might find feeling on the highest possible level. This was his choice; that was where he succeeded. All his subsequent writings were strongly colored by feeling.

It seems that it only gradually dawned on Swedenborg that his quest for God demanded that he change internally. The early Swedenborg could see God only as a rather remote, cold intellectual theology. To truly see God, the whole inwardness of Swedenborg had to be opened and intensified. He had to be instructed in the inner, subtle, rich language of feeling-image-symbolism. The whole feeling side of him had to be awakened and take a position superior to intellect. Hence, in the image above, he is the servant of the virgins, who happily give themselves just to lovers. These were the major changes in him as he went within. One minor conflict was that the inner wanted to call him away from his scientific preoccupation. At first he kept relating inner imagery to his scientific work. But he began to see that the inner carried a larger message. The inner described him as very swift (indeed, he produced scientific work at lightning speed), but at great cost. He had so much invested in the scientific effort that it took something like a year for the inner to pull him from this preoccupation. Even though, for a time, he tried to use the inner processes to gain time for his scientific work, the inner hammered him out of this preconception. The real issue became his relationship to the inner and how well he understood and accepted its trends.

The changes in Emanuel Swedenborg illustrate the usual effects of the successful journey within. The former habitual standpoint of consciousness (in his case, hyperintellectualism) encounters its opposite (feeling). The conscious orientation misunderstands its opposite. Swedenborg, for instance, at first thought the inner was commenting on and assisting his scientific work. As the encounter with the opposite increases, there is considerable storm, fear, and vacillation on the part of the habitual consciousness. Gradually, these opposite values mix (that is, intellect becomes more capable of feeling and feeling becomes more rational). The encounter resolves into a new standpoint for consciousness that combines these opposite values. In Swedenborg's case, this union is illustrated by the productive combination of feeling and thought through all his later works. This new standpoint of consciousness is symbolized by his comments on

his being a servant of the virgins. The result of the journey within is a fundamental broadening of the individual's values and perspective that takes account of what used to be habitually overlooked and discounted. Whereas he habitually saw everything in intellectual terms, the inner represented his scientific work as a load of rubbish the poor man was pulling. The new viewpoint was contained in the very feelingful symbolism he came to appreciate.

Swedenborg's prior religious training and experience actually served him well. He sought God above all else and believed that God could show from within, placing him in a respectful supplicant position. He could meet with and accept easily forces that would terrify a nonreligious man. At the same time, his religion was not naïve. There were other spirits within as well, and he had to sort out their quality and usefulness. He suspected his ignorance and unworthiness in relation to these inner forces. He easily accepted rather disparaging criticism from the unconscious. The sense of his unworthiness and childlike understanding deepened as he went within, until he described himself as becoming a child. This attitude toward his own lowliness enabled him to move faster in this realm. Although the *Dream Diary* covers his personal analysis rather well, it still covers only a period of seven months.

Toward the end of the *Dream Diary*, his dreams have a soaring quality. He is dealing with great forces. All bodes well:

Later I saw a great king, the king of France, who went about without a retinue and had such an insignificant household that he could not from this be recognized as royalty. There was one with me who did not seem willing to acknowledge him as king, but I said that he is of such a character as to care nothing about such things. He was courteous towards all without distinction and spoke also with me. As he left, he was still without his followers and took upon himself the burdens of others and carried them like clothes. Thereafter, came into a very different company, where there was much more splendor.

Then I saw the queen; and when a chamberlain came and bowed before her, she made just as deep a reverence, and there was nothing of pride in her. . . .

*Dream Diary* §§274–275

Swedenborg related the king directly to Christ. It is possible in this stage to become overinflated by identifying with the good forces within. Characteristically, Swedenborg identified most with lowly parts of dreams. The king had to be the Christ who moved inauspiciously among men and carried their burden. An earlier dream had Swedenborg carrying rags, here it is Christ. The great feminine verity is also present as the queen, but she

too acts without pride. Swedenborg himself was rapidly becoming humble, shedding his pride. That the king was not fully known means that Swedenborg himself didn't know or fully recognize the Christ yet.

There followed a dream with an intimate playfulness between Christ and Swedenborg:

It seemed as if it were Christ himself, in whose company I was as with another, without ceremony [Sw. *fazon*, "manner"]. He borrowed a little money from another person, about five pounds. I was vexed because he did not ask me. I took up two pounds, but it seemed to me that I dropped one and likewise the other one. He asked what it was. I said that I had found two and that one of them might have been dropped by him. I gave them, and he accepted. In such an innocent manner, we seemed to live together, which was *status innocentiae* [a state of innocence].

*Dream Diary* §276

At this time, Swedenborg had started work on *The Worship and Love of God* (in later years he didn't seem to think much of this unusual work), a work that suggests that he wanted to celebrate his new way of feeling and understanding. The book was very unlike anything he had ever done before; it is an epic poem, a youthful celebration. He allowed his inner feeling and imagination to burst forth in a colorful description of the creation of the universe and of man. It presaged much of what he was to find later in the Bible. He was free of the labored, tight, intellectual way in which he had always functioned in the past. Early in the writing of this book, he has this short dream, which very much describes the book: "I thought that a firework burst above me, shedding a shower of sparks of beautiful fire: [it means] love of the high, maybe" (*Dream Diary* §285).

Notice in what follows how clear feeling is and how it combines with understanding and what is elevated. The following long excerpt from *The Worship and Love of God* (§§111–112) describes Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. They are about to begin their married life. Try to visualize the scenes presented with their rich imagery:

They were now left alone, as one woman with one man, to pass the time in celebration before evening—and the sun still had as far to travel to its setting as it had come from its rising. The bride, holding hands with her bridegroom, led him through the grove that had been [natal] to her, and through its imposing meadows and its scenes; and it was, after all, like the stage of the world, surpassingly pleasant. They met nothing that did not drench each sense with the pleasure of beauty, and at the same time give them a subject for conversation; and their conversation gradually turned this first experience of their mutual life into an intimate one.

And there was nothing they encountered that could have failed to turn the young man's talk to a declaration of his love. Everything was in the bloom of spring, in marriage revels, and in its way coaxed pledges of togetherness from a love that was already eager to hasten its connection with a companionable mind. Nothing stood in the way of their wishes—heaven was favorable. No hesitation blocked them: instead, even the bride caught fire in response, the blaze of her love equal to and sharing in his own. She told him plainly that she was pleased and looked with favor on his coming. He in return was humbly grateful for her approval and declared she would be his sole delight in all the world, the glory and crown of his life, set on his head by those who dwelt in heaven, a crown that would be to him a pledge enforcing his faithfulness. So there was assent and agreement on both sides, which they confirmed with shared kisses.

The love conceived and born in those kisses grew and slowly took fire. Their mental life was in a whole state, and pure innocence roused and nurtured their love on delights sweet beyond sweetness—delights that won over the soul of their love in its newborn infancy.

From this start a new kind of life was beginning for both of them, different from the one they had had before, a life of which they had never been aware. In this life, nothing offered to the senses could please and appeal to the one without also affecting the mind of the other, as well as uniting and exalting their joy in their agreement over it. The current of all delights flowed into a heart virtually united, though divided into two chambers; and there it joined into a common stream, which took its sweetness from the pleasure of both alike.

112. In early morning, the dawn shot on high the rays of the rising sun, whose beams went forth like streaks tinged with gold into the hemisphere of the sky. They both awoke spontaneously, at the same time, from a sleep of perfect sweetness in the marriage bed they shared.

A heavenly radiance [flashed across] their eyes and shook the sleep out of them; it drew their gaze from one another and captured their attention. This was what appeared to both of them in the central part of the sky, as clear as day—a thing that was to show them the universe and symbolize it, with its destiny and its depths arrayed—

First: A center of the brightest light shone forth, of such infinite clarity that the flames of the sun radiated by the dawn faded into shadow, and the ruddy gold torches of the stars suddenly disappeared. Both watchers began to squint against the brilliant light, and then were compelled to close their eyes completely. Nonetheless, the splendor was so intense that it flashed through to the finest particles of their fibers. This center deluged the universe with its light, making its every boundary and limit vanish from sight.

Then—because of the impossibility of their grasping [the infinitude of the universe]—a murky stupor surged over the reach of all their senses.

Second: Around this intensely bright and extended center a border seemed to arise, blush-red in its brilliance, but flamelike, both shimmering with beauty and diaphanous, tinged with purple, a circle of gemstone. It flowed around [the center] in endless loops, like countless spiral arms in continuous contact, where the endpoints of the windings are rotated through a cycle, and when they have unwound, are rewound to the position at which they began. The cycling action was continuous, but because the loops merged with and withdrew from one another, they misled the vision, even though their curves flowed back and forth with extreme regularity.

This border and its meandering banks were crowned by faces and figures of surpassing beauty; around the foreheads of those faces were bands of gems, like little stars, surrounded by another tawny-colored border.

All resembled the face of the Firstborn, or of his far-beautiful companion, and represented forms of love, as [husband and wife] represented two forms of love in the bed where they lay.<sup>5</sup>

Swedenborg's feeling and imagery burst forth, presenting symbols and symbols within symbols growing, comprehending all. The inner process predicted this book would be written and probably had a hand in it. My best guess is that the inner felt that Swedenborg badly needed to practice the expression of this inner feeling symbolism and that this book was practice. Yet hidden in its rich imaginative symbolism is almost every idea he was to discover later. *The Worship and Love of God* is practice in a new way of living and experiencing, practice he needed. Yet because it was not based on any direct experience, Swedenborg regarded it a work of youthful exuberance.

Essentially, Swedenborg had finished the self-analysis and inner changes he inadvertently undertook when he went within to find the psyche, or soul. His real aim was finding God, the highest and most useful of all the verities. Inner psychic/spiritual visionary experience was now possible in almost any sphere or sense. Most of it still occurred near sleep, but he was also experiencing photisms, or the guiding flame, in the daytime. He also seemed to experience tremendously enriched imagery and presentiments of new truths at any time of day. Exploration of the hypnogogic state and the yogic meditation he used tended to change even waking consciousness.

At this point, then, Swedenborg was a scientist who had opened a whole new sphere. The direction he should take from now on was not clear to him. Thus, he prayed for guidance, and within a few months, the guidance came. He carried the same spirit in which he tried to master the world of science into his psychological/spiritual explorations. The inner struck him down for this before more was shown him:

I was in London and dined rather late at the inn where I was in the habit of dining, and where I had my own room. My thoughts were engaged on the subject we have been discussing. I was hungry and ate with a good appetite. Towards the close of the meal I noticed a sort of dimness before my eyes; this became denser, and I then saw the floor covered with horrid crawling reptiles, such as snakes, frogs, and similar creatures. I was amazed; for I was perfectly conscious, and my thoughts were clear. At last the darkness increased still more; but it disappeared all at once, and I then saw a man sitting in the corner of the room; as I was then alone, I was very much frightened at his words, for he said: "Eat not so much." All became black again before my eyes, but immediately it cleared away, and I found myself alone in the room.

When the visionary tendency finally broke into his waking life, it was frightening. He had overindulged in eating, and the message seemed to scourge him for this. But I agree with Alfred Acton's assertion that this too is probably symbolic.<sup>6</sup> The symbol is appropriate, for Swedenborg probably felt guilty for having eaten so much. But the incident began with his thinking of the recent conversation downstairs. He was thinking from self and indulging himself too much. Darkness grew, and there were crawly things all over the floor, like a warning. Don't eat—think—indulge yourself so much or you will make darkness and horror. He recalled this incident years later when talking to a friend. He associated this with the idea of people who thought so much that they led themselves astray. "We must not, by our own power and by own intelligence, begin to doubt the heavenly truths which are revealed to us. . . . You are well aware how often it has happened, that students and especially theologians, who unnecessarily indulged too much in speculations, have lost their understanding" (Docs I, 35). Hence, Swedenborg, the master of all the sciences, was put down for presuming to figure out this inner world. But the vision returned:

Such an unexpected terror hastened my return home; I did not let the landlord notice anything; but I considered well what had happened, I could not look upon it as a mere matter of chance, or as if it had been produced by a physical cause.

I went home; and during the same night the same man revealed himself to me again, but I was not frightened now. He then said that he was the Lord God, the Creator of the world, and the Redeemer, and that he had chosen me to explain to men the spiritual sense of the Scripture, and that He Himself would explain to me what I should write on this subject; that same night were opened to me so that I became thoroughly convinced of their reality, the worlds of spirits, heaven, and hell, and I recognized there many acquaintances of every condition in life. From that day I gave up the study of all worldly science, and laboured in spiritual things, according as the Lord had commanded me to write. Afterwards the Lord opened, daily very often, my bodily eyes, so that, in the middle of the day I could see into the other world, and in a state of perfect wakefulness converse with angels and spirits.

Docs I, 35–36

In another place, the man he had seen was described as "in imperial purple and in majestic light" (Docs II, 426).

The last obstacle to the personal changes needed in Swedenborg was removed. He could not presume by his own intelligence to deduce anything of this new realm. He would be shown; he was to be guided from within. The long effort of the inner to call him away from science was complete. He didn't even finish *The Worship and Love of God*, which he had been working on. The personal changes required in him were now complete. He

had broken through the personal inner world. The rest of his work would describe what he felt was beyond. The man who was slapped down for presuming too much with his intellect turned out to be a very faithful recorder of heaven and hell and all the universes beyond the human sphere. His outer life was so sane and normal that it was many years before anyone knew that he also walked in heaven and hell.

Swedenborg took this direct commission quite seriously. He turned to master the Bible in order to show its inner meanings to the world, which required years of quiet scholarship. There would be no more publications for a while. He perfected his biblical Hebrew and Greek, for he wanted to see the original words themselves. His style was to develop his own indexes and rely on these.

There began to come from his pen an eight-volume work, *The Word Explained*, an exposition of the inner meanings in the Bible. The scholar can find in it the beginnings of what was later to be his full understanding. Although he intended it for publication, his interest waned, but it was published after his death by his followers. This work was part of his exhaustive study of the Bible, where he found some of the same symbolism he had found in inner states. Sprinkled here and there are references to spiritual experiences, such as curious references to automatic writing (*Word Explained* §§459, 1150). Apparently, Swedenborg felt his hand being seized, and he wrote things of biblical figures that he didn't even approve of. He was becoming acquainted with what will be described later as lower-order spirits. The automatic writing seems to have appeared for just a while and disappeared when he didn't trust it as a process. He was learning in both the spiritual and biblical realms. Unfortunately, *The Word Explained* is not really worth reading, except by scholars who want to trace his development. Its initial insights were later to be replaced by the *Arcana Coelestia*, his mature masterwork.

A year after his commission by the Lord in 1745, Swedenborg began his five-volume *Spiritual Diary*. These are his running notes on experiences in the spiritual world. This personal record was not intended for publication either and appeared posthumously, a much more valuable work than *The Word Explained*.

Early quotations will suggest the kind of experiences he was having:

During the night between October 29 and 30, 1747, I had a dream from which I awoke repeatedly; for evil spirits kept on infesting me, so much so that I could not continue to sleep.

After awakening several times . . . I was seized with a trembling throughout the whole body, and I manifestly perceived that a certain column, as it were, surrounded me; I could sensibly perceive it. I awaited what would thence happen. . . . It was continually insinuated into my thought . . . that this was the “brazen wall,” as it is called (Jer. i 18; xv. 20), by which the faithful are defended from the infestation of evil spirits . . . afterwards, when I was in hell, and indeed in the body as I am today, a certain one of those miserable beings was permitted to speak to me, which he also did for some considerable time. . . . They complained of those free spirits or “furies,” who as yet lodge in the third heaven, that they are the ones who torment them; for their desire is to torment every man and spirit whatsoever. In a word, their torments are unspeakable; but I was allowed to encourage them with some hope.

*Spiritual Diary* §228

There was a certain soul with evil spirits around him, who, as I can surmise, never supposed otherwise than that he thought and did each and all things of himself. In order that it might appear clearly before the souls and spirits standing around how such a soul is led, and that he speaks and says nothing whatever except what inflows through the spirits who are around him, and invisible to him, there was dictated a merely trifling expression, and—as usually happens in the spiritual heaven—it appeared and was heard. This word, having been sent down, rolled about among the spirits, and thus came to all who were speaking; and the soul in them midst thus supposed that he spoke from himself, nor could he know otherwise.

*Spiritual Diary* §315

Today, some of those who were in heaven were desirous of knowing what heavenly joy is. It was therefore also granted them, by the mercy of God Messiah, to feel the heavenly joy to their inmost degree, even to such an extent that they could bear it no more.

*Spiritual Diary* §314

In this way, Swedenborg systematically kept track of spiritual experiences for nineteen years. The *Spiritual Diary* is a jungle of visionary experiences, almost too raw, too rich, too full of odd discoveries, clues to the arcane, and the tangle of devious spirits. It is good that Swedenborg, the careful expositor of truth, distilled out of this a coherent picture of the worlds beyond this one. This mining engineer had come a long way.



## 4

# WORLDS WITHIN WORLDS: HEAVEN AND HELL



SWEDENBORG'S CLAIM THAT HE WAS PERMITTED TO WALK in heaven and hell was one of his most controversial assertions:

I am well aware of the fact that many people will say that nobody can possibly speak to spirits or angels as long as he is living in the body, and that many will call it a delusion. Some will say that I have spread these ideas around so as to win people's trust, while others will say something different again. But none of this deters me; for I have seen, I have heard, I have felt.<sup>[1](#)</sup>

*Arcana Coelestia* §68

Only Swedenborg's experience of the highest heavens and of the lowest hells seemed limited, though it may have been simply that these were more difficult to describe. His experiences of heaven and hell first came in trance states. Later it became easier for him to explore these areas even in the midst of ordinary daily activities. After his introduction into these regions, there followed four years of exploration with no publications. The first work that came from the mature spiritual explorer was the great *Arcana Coelestia*. Some thirteen years after the opening of the spiritual worlds to him, *Heaven and Hell* appeared. Though references to the nature of the worlds beyond this one are scattered through all his works from the *Arcana*

on, *Heaven and Hell* was a mature pulling together and summarizing of the worlds beyond. (Incidentally, all of Swedenborg's great works from the *Arcana* on were published anonymously, until close to the end of his life. His great works came from the pen of an unknown "servant of the Lord.") The heavy intellectual style of his scientific works was gone. He spoke in a seasoned, balanced, unassuming, and direct way of his amazing discoveries. There were no speculation, no doubt, no ambiguity. As well as he could, in relatively simple Latin prose, he set forth what he knew and experienced. Yet it becomes apparent that he was speaking of new dimensions of human experience. Not all readers sensed the essential newness and vast scope of implications of what he said.

At the beginning of *Heaven and Hell*, Swedenborg speaks of those who doubt or deny the existence of heaven and hell:

Church people these days know practically nothing about heaven and hell or their life after death, even though there are descriptions of everything available to them in the Word. In fact, many who have been born in the church deny all this. In their hearts they are asking who has ever come back to tell us about it.

To prevent this negative attitude—especially prevalent among people who have acquired a great deal of worldly wisdom—from infecting and corrupting people of simple heart and simple faith, it has been granted me to be with angels and to talk with them person to person. I have also been enabled to see what is in heaven and in hell, a process that has been going on for thirteen years. Now I am being allowed therefore to describe what I have heard and seen, in the hopes of shedding light where there is ignorance, and of dispelling skepticism.<sup>2</sup>

*Heaven and Hell* §1

To my knowledge, there is nothing comparable to this account in the whole of world literature. Dante described heaven and hell, but his was a work of fiction based on legend and myth. Many religions imply something of heaven and hell. If one gathered together all the references in the Bible, the result would be a sketchy and ambiguous picture, as is also true of the other world religions. Myth and legend produce an unclear and ambiguous picture. But Swedenborg's description is fundamentally unlike all these. One cannot accuse him of simply inventing it, based on mythic and religious references. His is fundamentally different, and yet in accord with the few fragmentary references in the Bible. The essential nature of the heaven and hell that he described is so different from other accounts as to require some readjustment in our thinking about these regions. Spiritualists claim to contact the spiritual world. Even supposing that some do, it appears they are contacting only the lowest level of the worlds Swedenborg

described—and this lowest level can be quite deceptive, as Swedenborg was to make clear.

Since few others, if any, have visited heaven and hell while living on earth, Swedenborg's account appears beyond confirmation. Yet there are several kinds of confirmation that tend to substantiate his claim, even though they fall short of a personal visit. For one, he was able to bring back information from these worlds that seems to lie beyond the bounds of what he could ordinarily know. These somewhat miraculous confirmations will be described in [chapter 7](#). Second, people with psychotic hallucinations describe experiences remarkably similar to those of Swedenborg, a topic I discuss in [chapter 6](#). This implies that some part of madness consists of being thrust into an experience of worlds beyond this one, experiences that the disturbed individual neither wants nor can use. A third confirmation is that nothing that Swedenborg found was contrary to biblical revelation. In fact, he illuminated passages of Scripture that otherwise seem merely quaint or obscure. The final, and most critical, confirmation is internal. Swedenborg's heaven and hell echoes much of the innermost aspects of normal human experience. It was meant to. We are the image of all that is. This aspect is the most substantial, existential, and immediate of the confirmations. Should there be no heaven or hell whatsoever, Swedenborg's account would remain a most valuable and sensitive picture of the internal state of the human being. These confirmations will become clearer as we progress.

In a way, Emanuel Swedenborg's breakthrough to heaven and hell was not a complete surprise. He had experienced the presence of spirits for some years. Earlier in this book, I demonstrated that any person can have the experience of faint voices in the hypnogogic state, but while many have had this experience, few have made the effort to remember or record it. Even though Swedenborg lived in an age that gave more credence to spirits than the present, he was slow to come to this explanation. After numerous dreams, visions, temptations, double thoughts, and other strange experiences, he makes one reference late in the *Dream Diary* (§247) that he thinks a lot of these experiences can be accounted for by the presence of spirits. This would mean that the strange, symbolic words heard in the hypnogogic state actually reflect the presence of spirits. This does not, however, deny they are also autosymbolic representations of inner states.

After thirteen years of journeying in the worlds beyond this one, Swedenborg finally pulled together his findings in *Heaven and Hell*, one of his greatest and most popular works. Before exploring this work, I would like to describe briefly Swedenborg's style of writing.

## **The Mood of Understanding**

The main content of Swedenborg's theological writings is not immediately apparent because he was always speaking of inner states of man. If one is not prepared to understand inner states, his writings can easily seem abstract, dull, and pedantic.

Swedenborg wrote in Latin over two centuries ago. He tended to use long sentences, cramming as much as he could into each one. They are too rich to be read hastily and need to be broken down into pieces. If you are to grasp the reach of his sentences, you may have to pause clause by clause, sentence by sentence, to get the sweep of his meaning. Swedenborg's translators have been his followers and tended to keep close to his style, creating heavy sentences in translation, only in a few instances taking the liberty to lighten up his sentence structure.<sup>3</sup> Yet Swedenborg's writings are weighted with meaning, and need to be taken by pieces, slowly.

For example, let's look at *Divine Providence* §106: "Love dwells in its desires like a lord in a manor or a ruler in a realm. Their lordship and rule are over the elements of our minds, that is, of our volition and discernment, and through these over our bodies."<sup>4</sup> This one sentence covers the whole sequence of events from the inmost love, to its affections or feelings, to the will (volition) and understanding (discernment), to control over the body. The reach of ideas is rather great for one sentence. Swedenborg used the symbolism of his time (lord, manor, realm), yet he was basically saying that inmost love is the force that conditions all aspects of mind and actions—an example of Swedenborg's speaking of inner states. The reader gradually becomes familiar with his concepts. Elsewhere he wrote that what love leads into is affection (*Arcana Coelestia* §3938), or the whole affective and emotional basis of mind. What an individual loves, then, is the root and source of all other aspects of mind and action.

Not only was Swedenborg almost always dealing with inner states, he was also always speaking existentially. The "love that dwells in its affections" sounds like an abstract idea, but it isn't. He was speaking of his

own experience and asked that the reader confirm it in his own experience. At no point did Swedenborg ask that the reader take anything on faith. Elsewhere he explored the question of how thoroughly these things can be checked. He disparaged memory, or intellectual knowledge. The real is what a person does:

If a man had such a memory and such an understanding as to be able to know and perceive all the truths of heaven and of the church, but was unwilling to do any of them, is it not said of him that he is an intelligent but an evil man, and all the more he should be punished? From this it follows that he who separates the spiritual from the moral and the civil is not a spiritual or a moral or a civil man. From experience: There are such persons in the world, and I have talked with them after death, and have learned that they knew all things of the Word and many truths therefrom, and believed that on this account they would shine as stars in heaven; but when their life was examined it was found to be merely corporeal and worldly. . . . [T]hey became each his own will, and were cast into hell to their like . . . <sup>5</sup>

*On Divine Love and Divine Wisdom* §149

The first truths with man, which are called faith, are not yet living truths, for they are only in the memory and in thought and speech from the memory, adjoined to man's natural love, which is led to imbibe them by its craving to know; and by its craving for a reputation for knowledge and learning it calls them forth into thought or speech. But these truths begin to be living truths when . . . a life [is lived] according to them.

*On Divine Love and Divine Wisdom* §152

Even though Swedenborg was always dealing with inner states, these only became true or real when they were reflected in action. What at first seems abstract is very existential, real, actual. Because of this concreteness, it can and should be checked by the experience of others. Committing it to memory isn't enough. If the reader thinks of Swedenborg as always dealing with real, confirmable human experience, the obscuring clouds of the abstract will be swept away. He was always talking of existence—his and yours—since all human existence is essentially the same. <sup>6</sup>

Unless you are interested in inner states and ultimate knowledge, Swedenborg's writings will not attract you. We can only perceive, understand, and empathize with what echoes within ourselves. His writings are full of feeling; he repeatedly speaks of good and love, essentially feelingful concepts.

The attentive reader will discover that Swedenborg was trying to describe all that can be described. Only in speaking of some aspects of God or of the highest angels would he break off and say it is ineffable, more than can be said. Until those points, he described all there was: the inner and

outer states of the human being, this world, the worlds beyond this one, even other creatures on other planets.<sup>7</sup> He wanted to understand it all, and he came close to that goal. Also, the reader should recognize Swedenborg's tendency to deal with psychological and spiritual matters as a single realm. Only recent teachings have separated these into two categories. A person's mind or experience is his or her participation in the spiritual; thus, psychology and spirituality are always dealing with life, human existence. The spiritual is the inner and ultimate aspect of the psychological. To enter the spiritual world, or be in the spirit, one needs to go inward into the roots of human experience. Because the innermost is the spiritual realm, it is possible to enter the spiritual realm through inner exploration. We won't laboriously label what is psychological or spiritual in Swedenborg's works since these are one realm—life itself.

With these preliminary understandings, we can summarize Swedenborg's findings on his great psychological/spiritual journey.

## **The Nature of Heaven**

As I previously mentioned, Swedenborg's description of the multiplicity of worlds or levels of being represented by the concepts of heaven and hell is so fundamentally different from legend and myth that it takes some readjustment of thinking to understand his findings. *Fundamentally, a person's life in these other worlds is based on what he or she really is.* In the present world, each person explores, develops, and forms him-or herself, and we are quite capable of deceiving ourselves and others. In the worlds beyond this one, however, people are sorted out according to what they really are, *a move toward the essential reality of their existence.* Thus, Swedenborg found that the worlds beyond our earthly existence are even more essentially psychological and spiritual than this one.

Swedenborg's pervasive emphasis on the most essential nature of a person gives a surprising quality to his whole description of other worlds. In almost every aspect of his description, he moves away from petty externals and deals with essentials. He deals with the quality of the innermost heaven at the same time he is dealing with the innermost quality of mind. We are jarred into thinking of the real quality of our own life. The account begins to seem credible from this aspect alone, so that we have to stretch our

conceptions and deal with the essential nature of this life, even to begin to understand the worlds beyond this one.

Swedenborg's account begins with the issue of what a person really is. The two essential functions of the human being are understanding and willing. These psychological functions are the operations of his or her soul, or spirit, or life, for the spirit is the life. The person is a life or spirit acting within a body, a necessary instrument so the spirit can come to earth and act in the natural world.

Anyone who thinks things through carefully can see that it is not the body that thinks, because the body is material. Rather, it is the soul, because the soul is spiritual. The human soul . . . is our spirit; it is in fact immortal in all respects, and it is also what does the thinking in our bodies. This is because it is spiritual and the spiritual is open to the spiritual and lives spiritually, through thought and intention. . . . [T]he body is an addendum and almost an attachment to the spirit. Its purpose is to enable our spirit to lead its life and perform its services in a natural world. . . .

Since everything that is alive in the body—everything that acts and feels because of life—belongs to the spirit alone and none of it belongs to the body, it follows that the spirit is the actual person. . . . [E]verything that is alive and sensitive within us belongs to our spirit, and there is nothing in us, from head to toe, that is not alive and sensitive. This is why when our bodies are separated from our spirits, which is called dying, we still continue to be human and to be alive.

*Heaven and Hell* §§432–433

We may gather that inwardly we are spirits from the fact that after we depart from our bodies, which happens when we die, we are still alive and just as human as ever. To convince me of this, [the Lord] has allowed me to talk with almost all the people I had ever met during their physical lives, with some for a few hours, with some for weeks and months, and with some for years. This was primarily so that I could be convinced and could bear witness.

*Heaven and Hell* §437

Our being spirits inwardly has reference to our capacities for thinking and intending because these are our actual inner natures. They are what make us human, and the quality of our humanity depends on their quality.

*Heaven and Hell* §444

Swedenborg had finally found the soul. His anatomical work was unnecessary. The soul is the life, the spirit, the inner state of the human experience. The quality of this life is the quality of the person. Swedenborg rejected airy, abstract ideas of the soul that are not experienced:

[After death], [i]t has been believed that a person would be a soul; and the idea held about this has been no different from that of ether or air, that is to say, that it is breath like that a person breathes out on dying, but still retaining its vitality, though devoid of the kind of sight the eye has, of the kind of hearing the ear has, or of the kind of speech the mouth



has. Yet after death a person is just as much a person, and indeed so much so that he is unaware that he is no longer in his previous world. He can see, hear and speak, as in his previous world. He can walk, run and sit down. . . . He can lie down, sleep and wake up. . . . He can eat and drink. . . . He can enjoy the delights of married life. . . . In short, he is in every single respect a person. It is obvious from this that death is not an extinction but a continuation of life, and it is merely a passing over.<sup>8</sup>

*The True Christian Religion* §792

Angels guided Swedenborg through the experience of dying so he could know what it is like. The separation from the body comes soon after the breathing and the heartbeat stop. The person gradually awakens in the inner spiritual world, arriving at the threshold of the other worlds. Because the person still feels and senses things and awakens in a world much like what he is accustomed to, he may at first feel he hasn't died. The first state of the person after death is the state of exteriors. Everything is the same, people are the same, and the "dead" person lives as before.

Our first state after death is like our state in this world, since we are then similarly involved in outward concerns. We have similar faces, voices, and character. . . . This is why it still seems to us as though we were in this world unless we notice things that are out of the ordinary and remember that angels told us we were spirits when we were awakened.

*Heaven and Hell* §493

The closest analogy would be to the world of dreams, which also seems like the plain, ordinary, real world until one looks closer and pays attention to the differences. Like dreams, the spirit is now in a world of representations: he is beginning to meet his own nature in the things, people, and setting that surround him. This gradually becomes more apparent:

It often happens that married partners meet and welcome each other joyfully. They stay together as well, but for a longer or shorter time depending on how happily they had lived together in the world. Ultimately, unless they had been united by real marital love (which is a union of minds from heavenly love), they separate after having been together for a while.

If the minds of the partners disagreed, however, and if they were inwardly repellent to each other, they break out into open hostility and sometimes actually fight with each other. . . .

*Heaven and Hell* §494

This beginning level certainly has a familiar ring to it. The spirits are instructed regarding the spiritual world, and, of course, most conclude they will go to heaven. Swedenborg called this threshold world "the world of



spirits.” It is essentially a place where the spirit of a person is opened to its real nature, which means that it becomes no longer possible to act one way and inwardly be another. The person pauses at this threshold world long enough to become one with his or her real nature. This is the “judgment” of the soul:

[T]heir friends tell them about the state of eternal life and take them around to various places, into the company of different people. They go to different cities, to gardens and parks, often to gorgeous ones because things like this appeal to the outward concerns they are involved in. Then from time to time they are led into the thoughts they had had during their physical lives about the state of the soul after death and about heaven and hell. . . .

Almost all of them want to know whether they will make it into heaven. Many of them think they will because they led moral and civic lives in the world, not reflecting that both evil and good people lead similar outward lives, being similarly helpful to others, going to church, listening to sermons, and praying similarly, utterly unaware that outward behavior and outward worship accomplish nothing whatever, only the inner realities which give rise to these outward ones are effective.

*Heaven and Hell* §495

Swedenborg wasn’t trying to scare the reader; he was just reporting, and that is what makes it more frightening and convincing. The possibility of cheating one’s way into heaven dims when the internals are opened up in the second state of the world of spirits. This is the way the eternal judgment comes:

Once the first state has been completed—the state of more outward concerns . . .—we as spirits are brought into the state of our deeper concerns, or into the state of those deeper intentions and consequent thoughts we engaged in in this world when we were left to ourselves and our thinking was free and unfettered. We slip into this state without realizing it much as we did in the world when we drew the thought nearest to our speech, the immediate source of our speech, back toward our inner thought, and let it pause there a while. So when we as spirits are in this state, we are being ourselves and living our real life, since thinking freely from our own affection is our very life and our very self.

*Heaven and Hell* §502

When spirits are in this state of their deeper concerns, then it is obvious what kind of people they really were in the world. . . . People who were inwardly devoted to the good in the world then behave sanely and wisely, more wisely than when they were living in the world, in fact, because they have been freed from any connection with the body and therefore with the earthly things that darken and cover with a kind of cloud.

In contrast, people who were focused on evil in the world then behave foolishly and insanely, more insanely than when they were in the world, in fact, because they are in a freedom and are no longer constrained. As long as they were living in the world, they were outwardly sensible because this was how they imitated rational people. So when the outer layers are stripped off, their inner insanity is unveiled.

An evil person who outwardly pretends to be good can be compared to a brightly polished jar with a cover on, with all kinds of filth hidden inside, just as the Lord said: “You are like whitewashed sepulchers that look lovely on the outside but are inwardly full of the bones of the dead and all uncleanness” (Matthew 23:27).

*Heaven and Hell §505*

A person can even go through the opening of the Book of Lives in which every detail of the life is reviewed (*Heaven and Hell* §463). Occasionally, Swedenborg said something that sounded strange until its psychological validity is examined:

When we are being faced with our deeds after death, angels who have been given the task of examining look searchingly into the face and continue their examination through the whole body, beginning with the fingers first of one hand and then of the other and continuing through the whole.

*Heaven and Hell §463*

Swedenborg was himself surprised at this procedure, so the angels explained it to him. Everything a person has done is written in the nervous system. The fingertips represent actual deeds. Hence, the examination is begun there and works toward the interiors. This is another aspect of a person’s discovering what he or she actually is. The opening of the Book of Lives is a detailed review of everything that the spirit has been and done.

The next state after death is one in which a person is instructed. He has discovered what he really is, what his real tendencies are, a somewhat humbling experience. Those who are self-selecting themselves for heaven wish to know more of the worlds beyond this one, a need met by angelic instruction. Others, when opened, have fallen into their own grossness. They appear less wise than they did in the world—much like the impressive fellow who shows that he is a fool when drunk. These people close themselves off to instruction. They don’t sense the vast spiritual worlds beyond this one, falling into their inner tendencies and drifting toward the hell that matches them.

The distinction between the heavens and the hells is a critical one that Swedenborg described in many ways. The attitude that causes a drift toward heaven is in the feeling that there is a higher power and an effort to relate to it. This same spirit of humility and respect for the greatness of creation goes with an effort to be with others and to be of some use. By this, a person faces toward heaven. The nature of heaven reflects in Swedenborg’s statement that in heaven the joy of one is the joy of all. The opposite

attitude is to denigrate creation and elevate the self. The one bound for hell serves himself first, last, and foremost. By this attitude, he is cut off from the enlarging possibilities of heaven and becomes enclosed in concerns for himself over and above others. The distinction between heaven and hell will become clearer, but this is the fundamental difference. Heaven is a shared, expansive place; hell is a solitary, confined place where each struggles against others. Of course, on earth, we experience both tendencies. How much each individual has adopted a heaven-like or hell-like approach becomes more manifest as the essentials of his life are opened. Even in the instruction of those who have selected themselves for heaven, the emphasis is on the life, not on memory learning, as is most common in this world. The following is one of Swedenborg's many beautiful passages in which he had a feeling for this essential quality of heaven, almost too rich to grasp all at once.

Teaching in the heavens differs from teaching on earth in that [there,] knowledges are not consigned to memory but to life, since spirits' memory is in their life. They actually accept and absorb whatever agrees with their life and do not accept, much less absorb, what does not agree. This is because spirits are affections, and therefore have a human form that resembles their affections.

*Heaven and Hell §517*

The knowledge of spirits is in what they do. This is a more existential or fundamental conception of knowledge than we are accustomed to. Because it is life, they only learn what they act on. What their disposition does not permit them to live out, they do not learn. Essentially, spirits are affections or feelings, the inner or essential aspects of mind that underlie mere thought or memory. When stripped of the body and the less essential aspects of mind, these affections are even more in the form of the human being. Or—another way of saying it—the essential of a person is even more a person: “Since this is their nature, they are constantly breathing in a desire to know what is true, for the sake of constructive living. The Lord in fact sees to it that we love the constructive activities that suit our gifts” (*Heaven and Hell §517*).

Use or being useful was a fundamental idea with Swedenborg. He said elsewhere that heaven is a kingdom of uses. Everyone there does something to contribute to the general good. This is part of its shared quality and its happiness. Each follows the uses that reflect his or her basic disposition. Such a spirit is then bent for heaven, as all are who live out their uses. The

shared, communal quality of heaven becomes more apparent in the next lines:

[S]ince all the activities of heaven focus on a common use, which is the welfare of the Lord's kingdom (which now is our country), and since we fulfill our distinctive individual functions to the extent that they focus directly and intimately on that common use, all the countless distinctive and individual functions are good and heavenly. This means that for each of us an affection for what is true is united to an affection for usefulness to the point that they act as a one. A true understanding of use is sown in this way, so that the truths they learn are true perceptions of what is useful. This is how angelic spirits are taught and prepared for heaven.

There are various ways in which an affection for the truth suited to usefulness is instilled, many of them unknown in the world, primarily by depictions of useful activities. These can be presented in thousands of ways in the spiritual world, with such grace and charm that they permeate spirits all the way from the deeper levels of their minds to the outer levels of their bodies and therefore affect the whole person. As a result, spirits virtually become their constructive lives; so when they arrive in the communities their instruction has prepared them for, they are in their own life when they are engaged in their useful activities.

We may gather from this that awareness, which is an outward form of truth, does not get anyone into heaven. Rather, what gets us in is the useful life that is granted through knowledge.

*Heaven and Hell* §517

And so the person, having become his most essential self and use, joins a society in heaven. He joins the multitude of others, friends, who are in essentially the same use.

There are three levels of heaven beyond this intermediate world of spirits: the natural heaven, the spiritual heaven, and the celestial heaven. All the spirits in these heavens or kingdoms were once persons in the world. In many respects, the life of heaven cannot be understood as a simple extension of life in the world. Much of the character of the spiritual world is more nearly an extension of our inner experience. For instance, there is no time or space in heaven as we know it. In fact, Swedenborg said that ideas of time and space could impede our understanding of heaven. What corresponds to time is change of state. This is very like psychological time, which is more an inner state. It is much freer than the inexorable clock time of our world. A pleasant state seems short, an unpleasant one long. The endlessly frustrating dream may have taken a few minutes. A peaceful night's sleep can seem like a minute or two. The time of heaven is the *always now* time of the inner state:

I was thinking about eternity once, and using a concept of time I could grasp what "to eternity" entailed—namely, without end—but not what "from eternity" entailed and

therefore not what God did before creation, from eternity. As my anxiety mounted because of this, I was raised into the sphere of heaven and therefore into the perception of eternity shared by angels. This shed light for me on the fact that we ought not to think about eternity in temporal terms but in terms of state, and that when we do, we can grasp what “from eternity” entails, which was actually done for me.

*Heaven and Hell §167*

Swedenborg then had an ecstatic experience of the whole of creation.

A natural person may believe that we would have no thought if concepts of time, space, and matter were taken away from us, that all our thought is based on these foundations. Let such people know, though, that thoughts are limited and constrained to the extent that they derive from time, space, and matter, and that they are freed and expanded to the extent that they do not derive from such things. . . . This is the source of angels’ wisdom, which is so great that we must call it incomprehensible, since it does not fit into ideas that are formed merely from these [lower] concerns.

*Heaven and Hell §169*

Similarly, there is no space in heaven. What corresponds to distance is the feelings people have for each other. We also know the experience of being close to some and distant from others, regardless of the actual distances involved:

[P]eople who are nearby are the ones in a similar state and the ones who are far away are in dissimilar states. It is why space in heaven is nothing but the outward states that correspond to the inner ones.

This is the only reason the heavens are differentiated from each other, as are the communities of each heaven and the individuals in each community. It is also why the hells are completely separate from the heavens: they are in an opposite state.

This is also why in the spiritual world one individual is present to another if only that presence is intensely desired. This is because one person sees another in thought in this way and identifies with that individual’s state. Conversely, one person moves away from another to the extent that there is any sense of reluctance. . . .

Whenever people move from one place to another, whether it is within their town, in their courtyards, in their gardens, or to people outside their own community, they get there more quickly if they are eager to and more slowly if they are not. The path itself is lengthened or shortened depending on their desire, even though it is the same path. . . .

We can illustrate this by our own thoughts, . . . for whatever we focus on intently in our thought is seemingly present. . . .

*Heaven and Hell §§193–196*

This inner quality of psychological space/time becomes even more psychological when Swedenborg reports on how the external settings of angels are arranged. What the spirit experiences is a reflection of inner experiences. Things in the spiritual world can be seen only by spiritual

sight. What is seen and experienced is representative of the inner states. Spiritually rich inner states reflect in a surrounding that is gorgeous and rich. Barren inner states reflect in wretched surroundings. The spirit experiences what it is. On earth this is called projection. Our pervasive tendency to see and experience essentially what reflects ourselves is used in psychological projective tests. Asked to describe what is seen in an amorphous inkblot, people describe things that accurately reflect their inner nature. This little-appreciated phenomenon is apparently even more accentuated in heaven, according to Swedenborg's reports. Yet it is already our real tendency to notice and experience in the world what reflects us inwardly. The thief experiences a world in which everyone takes what he can get. In the same setting, the artist experiences the beauty of the things around him. What we encounter in the world reflects our nature.

In all respects, heaven resembles life on earth, except that it is more concerned with essentials. Corresponding to governments on earth, there is government in heaven, but those are given power who are of use to others. There are buildings, cities, hills, woods, etc.; but these are psychological realities corresponding to inner states. There are meals, but spiritual food has inner implications for the life and development of individuals. The garments one finds in the closet reflect changes in one's qualities. Everyone lives in societies of people with similar uses and disposition. But there is a universal language of understanding in heaven:

The speech that spirits employ among themselves does not consist of verbal expressions but of ideas, like those comprising human thought without words, and is therefore the universal language of all languages. But when they speak to man their speech falls into the expressions of human language. . . .

When discussing this matter with spirits I have been given to say that when they are conversing among themselves they are not able to utter one single word of human language, still less utter any name. . . .

*Arcana Coelestia* §1876

In one of Swedenborg's experiences, some spirits tried to utter human words but found the process of expelling air too grossly material.

Another aspect of heaven is that it is not a place of idleness. Everyone has work to do:

On the basis of an opinion formed in the world, some spirits have believed that heavenly happiness consisted of a life of leisure, being waited on by others; but . . . [t]his would mean wanting the happiness of others for oneself, in which case no one would have any at all. This

kind of life would be idle, not active, a life that would lead to atrophy. They might in fact have known that apart from an active life, a life has no happiness. . . . Then they were shown in many ways that angelic life consists of worthwhile, thoughtful actions, actions that are services to others. . . .

So that these people might feel shame (people who have had the notion that heavenly joy consists of a life of leisure, inhaling eternal bliss) they are enabled to perceive what kind of life this would be. They see that it is thoroughly miserable. . . .

*Heaven and Hell §403*

Swedenborg described only some of the work performed in heaven. Each society has a particular function. Some are involved in religious affairs, others in civil government; still others instruct children and infants:

These are general categories of angels' activities, but each individual has his or her specific contribution to make. This is because every general service is made up of countless elements that are called mediate or subservient or supporting services. All of these are arranged and ranked according to the divine design, and taken together they make up and complete an overarching function that is the common good.

*Heaven and Hell §392*

The angels . . . bore witness that it [a life of thoughtful good deeds] was the freest life of all because it stemmed from a deep affection and was invariably accompanied by an indescribable pleasure.

*Heaven and Hell §404*

We may gather the magnitude of heaven's pleasure simply from the fact that for everyone there it is delightful to share their pleasure and bliss with someone else; and since everyone in the heavens is like this, we can see how immense heaven's pleasure is. For . . . there is in heaven a sharing by everyone with each individual, and by each individual with everyone.

*Heaven and Hell §399*

It takes little imagination to see how such a social organization would be heavenly. Swedenborg described the delights of heaven:

To enable me to know what heaven and heavenly joy are and what their quality is, though, the Lord has allowed me to feel the pleasures of heavenly joy often and at length. Because this was living experience, I may indeed know about them, but there is no way to describe them. Still, something should be said in order to provide at least some notion about them. There is an effect of countless pleasures and joys that unite to present a single something, a unity or united affection that contains a harmony of countless affections. . . . It was still possible to perceive that there were countless elements within it, so beautifully arranged as to defy description. The qualities of those countless elements flow from the very design of heaven. . . . In a word, there are infinite elements in a most intricate form in every general entity, and there is nothing that is not alive and does not affect everything even at the very center, since heavenly joys emanate from the very center.

*Heaven and Hell §413*

Heaven's immensity is beyond description, for it includes not only all who have lived on Earth but all those from other planets in the universe as well. Swedenborg affirmed that he had met others from other planets and that there were innumerable inhabited planets in the universe. He underlined the diversity of people that made up heaven. In several places, he indicated that endless diversity of people is part of the beauty of heaven:

[W]hen a whole does arise from a variety of elements, and the elements are in a perfected form in which each associates with the other in the series like a sympathetic friend, then it has a perfect quality. Heaven is, then, a single whole composed of a variety of elements arranged in the most perfect form; for of all forms, the form of heaven is the most perfect.

*Heaven and Hell §56*

The highest or innermost of the three heavens is the celestial kingdom. It is distinctly and qualitatively different from the spiritual heaven. The language used is richer and more ineffable. The light is more intense. It is more interior, a world of affections or feelings. It is the will part of the heavens, while the spiritual kingdom is the understanding part. The people in the celestial kingdom are radiant. The highest angels here experience themselves as the will of God. The love that binds them together is the love of God, whereas the common love in the spiritual heaven is love of the neighbor. The angels there are in great innocence and wisdom. Life and energy flow from the Lord into the celestial heaven, then into the lower spiritual heaven, and from there into the outermost heaven. Perfection increases inwardly in all things:

The angels in the Lord's heavenly [celestial] kingdom far surpass the angels of the spiritual kingdom in regard to wisdom and splendor because they accept the Lord's divine nature on a deeper level. They live in love of him, and are therefore more intimately united to him. The reason for their excellence is that they have accepted divine truths directly into their lives and continue to do so. . . . This means they have them engraved on their hearts. . . .

. . . People like this know instantly, from an inflow from the Lord, whether the truth they are hearing is actually true. . . .

*Heaven and Hell §25–26*

There are some who came from the world and soon find their place in the celestial heaven. Others gradually progress there:

A matter wholly unknown in the world and worthy of mention is this: The states in which good spirits and angels live undergo constant change and perfection. In this way they



are conveyed to the more internal parts of the province in which they dwell, and so into more excellent functions. For in heaven purification takes place constantly, which is so to speak a new creation. Yet the situation is that no angel to all eternity can possibly attain complete perfection. The Lord alone is the perfect One. . . .

*Arcana Coelestia* §4803

Clearly, the progression from the world of spirits to the lowest heaven to the spiritual heaven to the celestial heaven forms a graduated series of spiritual perfections. Beyond that, there is the Lord, who is the inmost and highest. All in heaven see and know the Lord in the light in which they are. It could not be otherwise. It is, of course, true here too.

## **Hell**

The tendencies of hell are the opposite of those in heaven. This alone causes a fundamental separation of these kingdoms. The general design of heaven drifts toward joining with, working with, and loving others, which drifts toward the fundamental unity of the Divine. The general design of hell is an orientation toward self over others. This splits existence apart and causes dissension. We've all experienced both of these tendencies in ourselves, so we have a foretaste of all future worlds.

If a person's real orientation is toward self over others, he or she will most comfortably drift toward the company of like-minded persons in hell. In effect, we are judged by what we have made of ourselves. There are several aspects of this primary orientation for oneself. It may imply an emphasis on personal comfort, sensory experience, or wealth at the expense of others. It may imply a need to gain control over others. It is often reflected in an irritation over religious matters, or worse yet, an opposition to the Divine. In all these aspects, this orientation tends to tear the person apart from others and apart from the wonder of creation. Swedenborg casually mentioned even bishops he had met in hell.

It may not be apparent at first sight why hell exists or is a necessary reflection of divine love. The Lord might have designed creation so that everything was good. We would still distinguish degrees of good and came back toward the polar opposites of good and evil. Opposites, degrees of difference, are necessary for there to be understanding. Hell, as an opposite of heaven, is part of this clarification of creation. Furthermore, it is part of the range of differences that increase the wonder of creation. Just as

different languages, cultures, styles, ages, circumstances, and faces enrich this world, hell is part of the enrichment of ultimate possibilities.

But larger than this is the issue of human freedom. One could even question the amount of freedom of choice involved if everyone ended up in heaven. For Swedenborg, God loved humankind enough to give us the real freedom to live well or ill. Further, he said that only choices really made in freedom count. For this reason, he played down the miraculous predictions he was able to make. Miracles coerce belief, and Swedenborg would rather leave belief free to be chosen. Heaven and hell are the cosmic polarity of differences that reflect the gift of choice. Each person designs and eventually comes to the world of his or her own choices. Those who go to hell feel good there; it suits them better than heaven. The opposition and equilibrium of heaven and hell is a cosmic, ultimate representation of diversity and freedom:

[T]he relationship of heaven to hell and of hell to heaven is like that of two opposites that act against each other, with the action and reaction yielding the state of equilibrium within which everything exists. . . .

[I]t is . . . a spiritual balance, one of the false against the true and the evil against the good. Malicious falsity constantly breathes forth from hell and benevolent truth constantly breathes forth from heaven. This is the spiritual balance that provides us with our freedom for thinking and intending, since everything we think and intend depends either on evil and its consequent falsity or on good and its consequent truth. So when we are in this state of equilibrium, we are in . . . freedom. . . .

*Heaven and Hell* §§536–537

This equilibrium of opposites has to do even with our possibilities of perception. We must have darkness in order to appreciate light. This is true both in a natural and in a spiritual sense:

Like heaven, hell is differentiated into communities. In fact, there are just as many communities in hell as there are in heaven, since each heavenly community has an opposite number in hell, for the sake of the balance.

However, the communities in hell are differentiated according to their evils and consequent falsities because the communities in heaven are differentiated according to their good will and consequent truths. We may be sure that there is some evil opposite to everything good and some falsity opposite to everything true from the fact that nothing exists without a relationship to its opposite. The opposite enables us to know its actual nature and level. Opposition is the source of all perception and sensation.

This is why the Lord is constantly taking care that every community of heaven has its opposite in some community of hell and that there is a balance between them.

*Heaven and Hell* §541

As in many other instances, Swedenborg was also speaking of the interior life of the human being as a reflection or image of the giant cosmic opposites of heaven and hell. He was always in the midst of palpable existence:

Enlightened people also see that good and evil are two opposite things, as opposite as heaven and hell, and that everything good is from heaven and everything evil from hell. Further, since the Lord's divine nature constitutes heaven . . . , nothing flows into us from the Lord but what is good, and nothing from hell but what is evil. So the Lord is constantly leading us out of evil and toward good, while hell is constantly leading us into evil. Unless we were in between, we would have neither thought nor intention, much less any freedom or choice. We have all these gifts because of the balance between good and evil. . . .

We can see from this that the Lord is constantly flowing into every individual with good, just as much into the evil person as into the good. The difference is that he is constantly leading evil people away from evil, while he is constantly leading good people toward the good. The reason for this difference lies in us, since we are the ones who accept.

*Heaven and Hell §546*

Each person is a recipient of both good and evil and has a choice. The lifetime of choices determines his or her fate here and in the worlds beyond. The evil person receives good and converts it into evil, internally:

Our whole volition and love stay with us after death. . . . People who have intended and loved what is evil in the world intend and love what is evil in the other life, and then they no longer allow themselves to be led away from it. This is why people who are absorbed in evil are connected to hell and actually are there in spirit; and after death they crave above all to be where their evil is. So after death, it is we, not the Lord, who cast ourselves into hell.

*Heaven and Hell §547*

These evil and false proclivities are like black clouds that stand between the sun and our eyes and deprive us of the clear sunlight. All the while, the sun is trying to dispel the clouds. It is behind them, working away, and in the meantime a little hazy light does get through to our eyes by various detours. It is much the same in the spiritual world.

*Heaven and Hell §549*

Evil will strike some as a outworn idea that stirs up images of the devil and dull sermons. Swedenborg said elsewhere, “[R]egarded in itself evil, and sin too, is nothing else than being parted from good. Also, evil exists essentially in disunion” (*Arcana Coelestia* §4997). Hell is made up of those who break from others. The spirit of heaven is to do to others as we would have them do to us. Later, we will see a mystical implication of this in that we all are one life. To set one as better than another tears the fabric of existence. This shredding of the fabric of existence, called evil, carries with

it its own punishment: “[E]vil is so closely united to its punishment that they cannot be separated” (*Heaven and Hell* §550). The one who splits himself apart from others enjoys them less. This is quite unlike heaven, where the joy of one is the joy of all. The more opposed a person is to others, the more he finds them opposed to him. Evil or disunity fashions its own punishment. To persons living in this disunity, the good of heaven is like a sun behind the clouds. The falsity Swedenborg speaks of as associated with evil essentially means experiencing a fragmented world and missing the unity of existence. All this is permitted that we may know real freedom and that existence may know its full range of possibilities.

Swedenborg’s description of hell is disturbing. He said that all there see themselves as persons among persons, grouped in societies enjoying similar ways. It is in the light or truth of heaven that the grim truth of hell becomes apparent:

Seen in any of heaven’s light, all the spirits in the hells appear in the form of their own evil. Each one is in fact an image of his or her evil, since for each individual the inner and outer natures are acting as a unit, with the deeper elements presenting themselves to view in the outer ones—in the face, the body, the speech, and the behavior. So you can tell what they are like by looking at them. In general, they are forms of contempt for others, threats against people who do not revere them; they are forms of various shadings of hatred, of various forms of vengefulness. Savagery and cruelty show through from within. When others praise them, though, or revere and worship them, their faces compose themselves and look almost happy and gratified. There is no way to describe briefly all the ways these forms look, since no one is just like any other. There is only a general likeness. . . . In general, their faces are frightful, as lifeless as corpses. Some of their faces are black, some like little torches, some pimply, with huge ulcerated sores. In many cases there is no visible face, only something hairy or bony in its place, while with others only the teeth show. Their bodies are equally misshapen, and their speech seems to embody wrath or hatred or vengeance, since all their articulation comes from their false perception and all the tone comes from their evil intent. In a word, they are all images of their hell.

. . . . The savagery of these inhabitants is then imaged by frightful horrors that I forbear to mention.

It does need to be known, though, that hellish spirits look like this in heaven’s light, but that they look human to each other. This is a gift of the Lord’s mercy, so that they do not look as repulsive to each other as they do to angels. However, this appearance is deceiving, since the moment a ray of light from heaven is let in, these human forms turn into the monstrous ones that they are essentially, the forms just described, because in heaven’s light everything appears as it really is. This is also why they avoid heaven’s light and dive into their own illumination, an illumination like that of glowing coals or, in places, like burning sulfur. This light, though, turns into pure darkness when any ray of light from heaven flows in. This is why the hells are described as being in gloom and darkness, and why the gloom and darkness mean the kinds of malevolent distortions characteristic of hell.

Heaven and Hell §553

The spirit's introduction to hell seems friendly enough, at first:

[W]hen spirits voluntarily or freely arrive at their hell and go in, they are accepted cordially at first and think they have arrived among friends. This lasts only a few hours, though. All the while they are being probed to find out how crafty they are, and therefore how powerful. Once this probing is complete the attacks begin in various ways, getting more and more severe and intense. The intensification is effected by their being taken farther and deeper into hell, since the farther and deeper you go there, the more malevolent are the spirits. After these attacks, the malevolent spirits begin to torment the newcomers with punishments until finally they are reduced to slavery.

However, since rebellious movements are always arising (everyone there wants to be greatest and burns with hatred against everyone else, which keeps generating new attacks), the scene is constantly changing. The people who were enslaved are released and offer their support to some new devil for the subjugation of others. Then the ones who do not surrender and yield their obedience are tortured in various ways, and so on and on.

Torments like this are the torments of hell that are referred to as hell fire.

*Heaven and Hell §574*

Some of the hells have a familiar ring to them:

In the milder hells you can see crude huts, sometimes grouped in something like a city, with alleyways and streets. There are hellish spirits in these homes, with constant quarrels, hostility, beating, and butchery. The streets and alleys are full of thieves and robbers.

In some hells there are nothing but brothels, foul to look at and full of all kinds of filth and excrement.

There are also dark forests where hellish spirits roam like wild beasts; and there are underground caves there where they flee when they are being threatened by others. Then there are desert areas where everything is barren and sandy, with rugged cliffs here and there with caves in them, and huts scattered around as well. People are exiled from the hells into these desert places if they have suffered to the limit, especially people who in the world were craftier than others in the skills of deliberate manipulation and deceit. This kind of life is their final lot.

*Heaven and Hell §586*

The immense multitude of people that make up heaven and hell does not exist in time and space, or—the same thing—in the material world. Theirs is a complex hierarchy of spiritual worlds visible only to the inner or spiritual sight. Even within these worlds not all can see or experience each other:

The heavens there are on the higher ground, the world of spirits there is in the lower areas, and beneath both lie the hells.

The heavens are not visible to spirits in the world of spirits unless their inner sight has been opened. Sometimes they do appear, looking like gleaming white clouds. This is because heaven's angels are in a more inward state as regards their intelligence and wisdom, so they are beyond the sight of people in the world of spirits.

The spirits who are in the plains and valleys can see each other, though when they are being sorted out (which happens when they are being let into their inner natures), then evil spirits do not see the good ones. The good ones can still see the evil ones, but they turn away from them, and spirits who turn away become hard to see.

. . . all the gates into the hells open from the world of spirits, none from heaven.

*Heaven and Hell* §583

There is no one devil or satan. There is only the evil of evil persons.

## **The Principle That Unites All the Worlds**

When Swedenborg started his journey inward, he watched inner processes spontaneously represent themselves in images or in things said. This was a natural example of a principle that he had suspected united all levels of existence. The inner can represent itself by images, which are of a lower order and a different nature from the inner. Dreams correspond to the person's life situation at the time they are dreamt.

The levels of existence correspond to each other, and the idea of correspondence knits all levels of existence into a related whole. The ramifications of Swedenborg's treatment of correspondence could fill several volumes in itself, but it is enough for the reader to get a general grasp of what is involved.

A great deal of our own existence involves correspondence, because the scope of our individual world works across several levels of existence. Feeling, or affection, is the most inward and fundamental aspect of mind. To this corresponds thought. In the hypnogogic state, it is possible to watch feelings shape their corresponding thoughts.<sup>9</sup> Unless a person is trying to deceive, his words will correspond to his thought. His face itself corresponds to his inner mood or feeling. Because heaven involves an even truer correspondence of the inner and outer, Swedenborg said the speech and the faces of angels correspond to their life even more than in persons on earth. It is said angels can know the essentials of a person's life from a few uttered words (*Heaven and Hell* §236). What angels and spirits experience around them corresponds to their interiors. In a less clear and obvious way, this is true with us, too. The loving person experiences a loving world. Thieves find a world in which everyone is trying to grab from others. The holy man finds everything holy. Swedenborg even found correspondence between the spiritual and natural worlds:

First, I need to state what correspondence is. The whole natural world is responsive to the spiritual world—the natural world not just in general, but in-detail. So whatever arises in the natural world out of the spiritual one is called “something that corresponds.” It needs to be realized that the natural world arises from and is sustained in being by the spiritual world, exactly the way an effect relates to its efficient cause. . . .

Since a human being is a heaven and a world in least form in the image of the greatest . . . , there is a spiritual world and a natural world within each of us. The deeper elements, which belong to our minds and relate to our intelligence and volition, constitute our spiritual world, while the outer elements, which belong to our bodies and relate to our senses and actions, constitute our natural world. . . .

*Heaven and Hell* §§89–90

[T]he inner is the one that is called the spiritual person, and the outer the natural person. We can also see that they are as distinct from each other as heaven and earth, and that everything that happens and comes forth in the outer or natural person does so from the inner or spiritual one.

*Heaven and Hell* §92

Correspondence brings all levels of reality into relationship, yet it permits a multiplicity of existences. Existence itself may be said to correspond to a thought in the mind of God. All the levels of existence correspond to each other—from the Lord to the celestial heaven, to the spiritual heaven, to the lowest heavens, to the world of spirits, to the interiors of a human being’s experience, to the exteriors of experience, to the body, and to the world. Hell corresponds as an opposite to heaven. Inwardly, hell corresponds to the possibility of our losing track of our real nature. The Lord rules the whole of creation by correspondences, through the heavens to the world of spirits; to the innermost of a person’s mind; to will, understanding, outer memory and senses; to the body itself; and to the natural world beyond. The innermost of mind participates in heaven and hell. Our experience is not merely an image of the whole. Inwardly, it participates in the whole. It is an example of all there is.

It would be an obscuring and unnecessary limitation to deal with Swedenborg as though his is only a religious or only a psychological system. It is both at once because both are life. But let’s look closer at the way the grandeur of heaven and hell come home in the interiors of personal experience.

## THE GENTLE ROOT OF EXISTENCE



THERE IS AN IDEA SO CENTRAL IN SWEDENBORG'S psychological-spiritual findings that to grasp it is to grasp the real basis of mind, or human experience *and* the nature of the worlds we are destined to experience beyond this one. The idea revolves around the concepts of love, affection, and feeling. Swedenborg had much to say of these, so we can determine quite well what he meant. Fortunately, these gentle experiences unlock and account for the innermost of the human. Much of what Swedenborg has to say can be checked in our own experience, even though what he points to lies beneath thought and experience. Many will find that Swedenborg's explanation puts in good order the otherwise puzzling variability and richness of mind. It is also fortunate that these gentle ideas, in a palpable and reasonable way, account for our living in the presence of the spiritual worlds. Moreover, to grasp these ideas is to grasp the essence of the design of the worlds awaiting us beyond this one.

Swedenborg's earlier life was an intellectual one, in which the scientist-engineer pieced together all the things of nature. Later, he became a philosopher and pushed to the limits the possibilities of intellectual analysis and speculation. When he started examining dreams and inner processes, it was apparent that he had trouble with the irrational and feeling side of experience. Gradually, he came to terms with his own sensual-feeling



values. The last scourging he had from the Lord before he was introduced into heaven and hell said in effect that intellect was to be servant and not master. The whole journey inward had turned his inner priorities around. The dreams, symbols, and visions he came to understand were all in a language of feeling. Correspondence and representation, or symbolization, is essentially the language of feeling, not of intellect. Intellect and reason have to be helped even to understand and accept this more primitive language of correspondence. Only feeling can find its meanings. Now we see Swedenborg after years of wandering in heaven and hell. There is no question at this point but that feeling rules and reason is her servant. Thus, one of the world's most brilliant intellects had found what is higher than intellect.

It will be recalled that heaven is essentially a state in which the most central and truest aspects of the person are opened up and lived out. From the perspective of this experience, Swedenborg came back to describe the human being in terms of his essentials. This provides a picture of a person that is relatively unique in all the psychologies. Instead of assigning affect or feeling a secondary role, it is clearly central.

## **The Ruling Love of the Life**

Swedenborg was aware that there are aspects of mind that are little known or understood:

We know absolutely nothing about the inner state of our minds; yet there are infinite things there, none of which comes to our awareness. The inner working of our thought or our inner self is our actual spirit. . . .

*Divine Providence* §120

This idea of the spirit's being the person in its form is a key one. Swedenborg pointed to the essence of humanness. In effect, humanness becomes even more human as one goes within.

Among the aspects humankind has trouble understanding is love itself, because while love can be felt, it does not have as definite a form as thought:

For most people, the existence of love is a given, but the nature of love is a mystery. As for the existence of love, this we know from everyday language. We say that someone loves us, that monarchs love their subjects, . . . that a husband loves his wife and that a mother

loves her children, and vice versa. We say that people love their country, their fellow citizens, their neighbor. We use the same language about impersonal objects, saying that someone loves this or that thing.

Even though the word “love” is so commonly on our tongues, still hardly anyone knows what love is. When we stop to think about it, we find that we cannot form any image of it in our thoughts, so we say either that it is not really anything or that it is simply something that flows into us from our sight, hearing, touch, and conversation, and therefore influences us. We are wholly unaware that it is our very life—not just the general life of our whole body and of all our thoughts, but the life of their every least detail. Wise people can grasp this when you ask, “If you take away the effects of love, can you think anything? Can you do anything? As the effects of love lose their warmth, do not thought and speech and action lose theirs as well? Do they not warm up as love warms up?”<sup>1</sup>

*Divine Love and Wisdom §1*

The central aspect of any human being Swedenborg called the ruling or reigning love, or sometimes the love of the life. This is the core of individuality and indeed the source of life itself, the same as the person’s life itself. It conditions all other aspects of mind because it rules. One could hardly think of a more fundamental conception of the human being:

Our love is our life. Whatever our love is like, that is what our life is like—in fact, that is what our whole self is like.

But our primary or controlling love is what makes us the person we are. This love has many subordinate loves that come from it. These loves appear in different ways outwardly, but all of them fit in with the primary love and make one realm with it. The primary love is like their ruler and head. It guides them and uses them as intermediate goals in aiming for and working toward its own goal, which is the primary, underlying one. It does this in both direct and indirect ways. Our primary love is whatever we love more than anything else.

Whatever we love more than anything else is constantly present in our thinking and our motivation. It is the central nature of our life. Here are a couple of examples:

If we love wealth more than anything else, whether it is money or possessions we want, we are always turning over in our minds how we can obtain it for ourselves. We feel very happy when we gain wealth, and very sad when we lose it, because our heart is in it.

If we love ourselves more than anything else, we keep ourselves in mind in every little detail. We think about ourselves, talk about ourselves, and do things for our own benefit, because our life is a selfish one.<sup>2</sup>

*Heavenly Doctrine §§54–55*

Thus, the love of a person’s life is the real love, ruling over and holding in subordination many other derivative loves, affections, or feelings. This ruling love contains the person’s end or purpose in living. The influence or ruling of this essential love of anyone’s life is subtle and pervasive, reaching all aspects of mind:

Whatever we love more than anything else, we have as our goal in life. It is what we pay attention to in everything we do. It is present in our motivation like a hidden current in a river, pulling and carrying us along even when we are doing something else. It is what moves us. This primary love is what we look for and see in other people. Depending on what their primary love is, we either use it to influence them, or we work together with them.

*Heavenly Doctrine* §56

To underline the central role of the ruling love, Swedenborg referred to it at various times as a person's life itself, his own Self, his character, the essence of his life, his soul, and the very form of his spirit. Clearly, this dominant passion affects perception and interpersonal relationships:

Everything about us comes from the primary tendency of our life. This is what distinguishes us from other people. If we are good we make our heaven according to it, and if we are bad we make our hell according to it. It is our basic motivation, our personality, and our character, since it is the reality of our life. It cannot be changed after death because it is our essential self.

*Heavenly Doctrine* §57

Swedenborg had found the soul in the most obvious place, as the very life itself of the human being. The Greek for soul is *psy khé*, from which came the word psychology. It isn't appropriate to say a person *has* a soul, but rather a person is a soul or a life:

As regards the soul, which—it is said—goes on living after death, it is nothing else than the actual person living in the body. That is, the soul is the person's inner self acting in the world by means of the body and imparting life to the body. When his inner self is released from the body the person is called a spirit. . . .

*Arcana Coelestia* §6054

Our soul is simply the love of our [will] and the consequent love of our [understanding]. The nature of this love determines the nature of the whole person.

*Divine Providence* §199

Is this ruling love conscious in each person? All the derivatives of it are conscious because, as we shall see, they are all the other aspects of mind. Also, the love of the person's life can be inferred from what interests or excites that man or woman. Yet it cannot be conscious in itself as a specific thing, because it is the general source or basis of all human experience. There is a tantalizing aspect to Swedenborg in that he always describes what is innermost as most general, perfect, and most peaceful; yet it cannot be grasped as a specific because it is the general base or origin of our life.

[T]he feelings of our inner thinking that give rise to the outer ones never come to our notice. We are no more aware of them than a sleeping passenger in a carriage is aware of the road, or than we are aware of the earth's rotation. . . .

[But] if you were to see only one concept of our thought fully opened up, you would see more astounding things than language can express.

*Divine Providence* §199

From the root love of a person's life extend all the affections or feelings enjoyed by that person, and from them is derived the whole feeling life of him or her. Swedenborg reminded us of his skill in anatomy and symbolism in providing a beautiful image of our emotional or affective life:

By affections are meant the continuations and derivations of love. Love may be compared to a fountain, and affections to the streams issuing from it. Love may also be compared to the heart, and affections to the vessels leading out and continued from it; and it is well known that the vessels that convey blood from the heart resemble their heart in every point, so as to be as it were extensions of it; from this is the circulation of the blood from the heart through the arteries, and from the arteries into the veins, and back to the heart. So with affections; for these are derived and continued from love, and produce uses in forms, and in these proceed from the firsts of the uses to their ultimates, from these they return to the love from which they started. . . .

*On Divine Love and Divine Wisdom* §22

Love comes forth and manifests itself in the uses or the good it does. It advances in the realization of itself through these uses, creating ever more its own end. In this manifesting of itself, it comes to recognize its ultimate nature. Through its actions, it returns again to its source or nature:

Goodness is what pleases our feelings and truth is what therefore appeals to our thinking. We call "good" whatever we feel as pleasant because of the love of our volition, and we call "true" whatever we therefore sense as appealing because of the wisdom of our discernment. In each case, this flows from our life's love like water from a spring or blood from a heart. Together they are like an atmosphere or a wave that surrounds the whole human mind.

*Divine Providence* §195

The atmosphere of the whole mind—that is love and its derivative affection or feelings. Swedenborg also referred to affections as bonds, because they rule and control (*Arcana Coelestia* §3835). It is an existential paradox that the bonds of affections are related to freedom. In effect, we feel free when we can act from our real feeling:.

First, . . . it needs to be clear that all freedom is a matter of love, even to the point that love and freedom are the same thing. Since love is our life, freedom is also essential to our life. Every pleasure we experience comes from our love; there is no other source of pleasure.

Acting for the sake of the pleasure of our love is acting in freedom, because pleasure leads us along, the way a river bears its burdens quite naturally along its current.

*Divine Providence* §73

Thus, we know the greatest feeling of freedom if we become what we are most essentially. We are constrained in any other direction, but free to try it. This is similar to evil. By breaking existence apart, evil creates its own constraint. We are free to deviate, but there are natural mechanisms to remind us or call us back. This very human paradox will arise again and has important mystical implications to be seen later.

Love and feeling as the life of the human being and the atmosphere of his or her inner experience have, as their first main correspondent or derivative, will. Will results in action. What one really loves, one wills and does. By this simple sequence, love comes to earth in things done, what Swedenborg called uses, or goods. As is characteristic of him, what at first seems abstract or evanescent is brought down to earth in the most concrete way:

Love in action is the word and the deed.

*Heaven and Hell* §483

Loving the truth is intending and doing it.

*Heaven and Hell* §15

[T]he soul of our volition is love.

*Divine Providence* §193

That the will is man's love in form is clearly evident from this, that every enjoyment, pleasure, pleasantness, satisfaction and bliss which belong to man's love are . . . [what] he wills. . . . [H]e wills what he strives for and seeks because he love it. . . . From all this it can be seen that the will and the love . . . are one with man; and the the will, because it is the love, is also the life, and is the man himself.

*On Divine Love and Divine Wisdom* §54

To think and intend without acting when we can is like a flame sealed in a jar and stifled, or it is like seed sown in the sand that does not grow but dies along with its power to reproduce. Thinking and intending and doing, though, is like a flame that sheds its light and warmth all around, or like seed sown in the soil, that grows into a tree or a flower and becomes something.

*Heaven and Hell* §475

The love that comes to earth through a person's will also generates thought and understanding. Thought or understanding is, in effect, a

correspondent, or image, of feeling, the form that represents feeling. Feeling is the ruling source of thought, too:

[W]e do not have any thoughts that do not come from some feeling of our life's love, and . . . thought is simply a form of feeling. . . . [T]hought drifts along in its pleasure like a boat in the current of a river, a current that the skipper does not notice because all attention is on the billowing sail.

*Divine Providence* §198

Thinking is actually nothing but an inner sight.

*Divine Love and Wisdom* §404

The sails are like the thoughts, the manifest part of the ship's movement, but feeling is the current. Many think they rule themselves by their thoughts. I remarked earlier that, in the hypnogogic state, it is easy to watch the background feeling forming thoughts and words to fit it. Swedenborg pointed toward this underlying affective or feeling layer of mind and beyond it to the ruling, central affective direction of the individual. It will be seen that he did not disregard thought as of little use; he said only that it reflects deeper processes. The affective side of thought can be felt as the tone or as the background of feeling from which thought arises. Thought gives feeling form and is part of its actualizing. If a person's thoughts are faithful to their feeling base, others can sense something of these feelings from the thoughts. It is as though feeling or good yearns to actualize as truth or act.

In the following quotations, Swedenborg put together the whole sweep of the mind's operation, or the human inner experience.

The inner level of our thinking comes from our life's love and from the feelings and consequent perceptions that this love prompts. The outer level of our thinking comes from items we have in our memory that are useful to our life's love as supports and as means to its ends. From early childhood to young adulthood we are absorbed in the outer level of our thinking because of our impulses to learn, which at this point constitute our inner level. . . .

Later, though, the way we live shapes our life's love, whose feelings and consequent perceptions make up the inner level of our thinking. Then our life's love gives rise to a love of means; and the pleasures and the information those means elicit from our memory make up the outer level of our thinking.

*Divine Providence* §105

[Our life's love] rules over the inner level of our minds through our desires and their perceptions and over the outer level of our minds through the pleasures of those desires and the thoughts that result from them.

*Divine Providence* §106

In case there is any doubt, a little elaboration indicates that he is speaking of all aspects of mind:

There are many forms of love that have been given their own names because they are derivatives, such as desires, cravings, appetites, and their gratifications and delights. There are many forms of wisdom, too, like perception, reflection, memory, thought, and focus on a subject. Further, there are many forms that come from both love and wisdom, such as agreement, decision, and resolve to act, among others. All of these belong to both [love and wisdom], but they are assigned their names on the basis of what is dominant and nearer to hand.

Finally, our senses are derived from these two, our sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, with their own pleasures and satisfactions. The appearance is that our eye is seeing, but our discernment is seeing through our eye. . . . the wellsprings of all these functions are love and wisdom; we can therefore tell that these two constitute our life.

*Divine Love and Wisdom* §363

Swedenborg ties together the whole in a lovely image of a tree: “The life’s love is the tree; the branches and leaves are the desires for what is good and true and their perceptions; and the fruit is the pleasures of those desires and their thoughts” (*Divine Providence* §107) Or he uses the imagery of love and sexual relations:

[S]ubsidiary loves or impulses attach partners to themselves, each individually, the deeper impulses choosing partners called perceptions and the more outward impulses choosing partners called thoughts, and that each lives with its partner and meets the responsibilities of its own life. . . . The union of life is like the union of sound and harmony or sound and speech or, broadly, like the union of the heart’s beating and the lungs’s breathing, the kind of union in which neither partner is anything apart from the other but in which it becomes something through its union with the other.

*Divine Providence* §194

The inner worlds of experience are infinitely varied and multiply endlessly: “No individual enjoys any desire or perception so much like someone else’s as to be identical, and no one can to eternity. Further, desires can bear fruit endlessly and perceptions can multiply endlessly” (*Divine Providence* §57). We can now clearly see that, although Swedenborg’s works look intellectual, they are colored everywhere by feeling.

Swedenborg had experienced the total ordering of mind, a truly rare experience. The ordering within individual minds is like the structure of societies in heaven. Since love is the key, everything is arranged in relation to it:

[T]ruths present with a person are arranged and ordered into sequences. The truths most in harmony with his loves lie in the middle; ones less in harmony with his loves lie immediately around those in the middle, while truths that are not at all in harmony with his loves lie pushed back to the peripheries. And lying outside the whole sequence are those which are contrary to his loves.

*Arcana Coelestia* §5530

Swedenborg was very clear that the mind is ruled or run from the inside out. The levels of mind we usually call our self reflect even more basic processes. In effect, we are transcended by our own inner nature. Another way of saying it is that our conscious experience is a transcendence coming to earth in our lives; this coming to earth is our life. It would take a long careful study of the phenomenology of inner experience to prove how correct Swedenborg is in this. At this point, I can only refer the reader to my work *The Natural Depth in Man*, which illustrates this very matter.

In brief, a careful study of thought, imagery, and any discrete mental processes shows them to be embedded in affect or feeling. A very close examination shows that thought arises out of and reflects feeling. Any experimental manipulation of feeling, as in hypnotic suggestion or auto-suggestion, clearly affects subsequent thought and perception. Most of this root of experience, this sea of background feeling, or atmosphere of our thought, is not really under our command. I choose to call this area the region where we are transcended. It is a region whose laws, causality, forms, and sometimes even its existence are not well known to us. Inwardly it is the aspect of ourselves that surprises and even transcends our limited outer conscious selves. It was partly this profound, phenomenological accuracy of Swedenborg that attracted me to his writings.

Swedenborg has several ways of describing this relationship of the inner to the outer aspects of mind, which has a critical bearing on the scope and real nature of humanness. It also bears on how presumptuous we can be in our conception of ourselves. And this, in turn, bears on whether we are creating a heaven or hell. The one who is creating a hell tends to consider the discrete doings of mind his real region of self-rule. He overlooks or considers of little importance the gentle, feeling background. The one who is creating a heaven feels he participates in processes that really transcend the limits of the little self. One can easily relate this to the shared aspect of heaven and the isolated aspect of hell. The heavenly one feels embedded in, a participant in, a varied creation that includes the self among others. The myriads of others are the larger aspect of creation. The one designing a hell



gives precedence to self over others. In effect, the effort to dominate the others, who are far greater than the self, brings the individual under the punishment of others. These are not mere happy images of spiritual processes borrowed from the social realm. The social realm is a correct, true, palpable representation of the eternal. But let us look at the emergent aspect of mind, and then later see the real inner connection with the worlds beyond this one.

Swedenborg commented on the different appearance in heaven between those who worshiped in church voluntarily and those who felt compelled to go. The inner aspect of the former looked like bright clouds, those of the latter like dark clouds. Then he says, “[O]ur outer nature resists compulsion so definitely that it turns in the opposite direction. The reason what is inside can control what is outside is that what is inside is like a master and what is outside is like a servant” (*Divine Providence* §136). It is clear that the rule is from inward to outward:

Our outer and inner levels of thinking mean much the same as our outer and inner selves, which is the same as our outer and inner volition and discernment, because volition and discernment are what makes us human. Further, since volition and discernment come to our consciousness in thoughts, we can speak of outer and inner levels of thinking.

Since it is not our bodies but our spirits that intend and discern and therefore think, it follows that this outer level and inner level are outer and inner levels of our spirit. Our physical behavior, whether in speech or in action, is nothing but an effect of the inner and outer levels of our spirits, since the body is simply obedience.

*Divine Providence* §103

The body does not do anything by itself; everything it does comes from the spirit inside it.

*Heavenly Doctrine* §46

In the internal there are thousands and thousands of things, which in the external appear as one general thing. Therefore thought and perception are the clearer as they are more interior. From this it follows that a person ought to be in internal things.

*Heavenly Doctrine* §47

All those who are in an external apart from an internal, that is, with whom the spiritual internal has been closed, are in hell.

*Heavenly Doctrine* §47

The natural is a kind of face in which interior things behold themselves; and it is thus that a person thinks.

*Heavenly Doctrine* §48

Internal things are those which are represented, and external things those which represent.

*Heavenly Doctrine* §262

The inner level of our thinking comes from our life's love and from the feelings and consequent perceptions that this love prompts. The outer level of our thinking comes from items we have in our memory that are useful to our life's love as supports and as means to its ends.

*Divine Providence* §105

The memory here includes knowledge of language. Spoken thought comes from the external of memory to serve the inner affective or emotional aspect of mind.

Swedenborg occasionally made a direct appeal to the reader to check out something in his own experience, such as the following:

Anyone whose rationality has not been beclouded can see or grasp the fact that if we did not seem to be in possession of ourselves, we would not experience any wish to know anything or any wish to understand anything, since all pleasure and satisfaction and therefore all volition comes from feelings that derive from love. Who could set out to know or understand something unless there were some feeling of satisfaction involved? Could we have any such feeling of satisfaction unless what moved us seemed to be really ours?

*Divine Providence* §76

Swedenborg's unclouded rationality would correspond to a careful phenomenological study that attempts to see and describe what exists in mind: "We can . . . see quite clearly that we have inner and outer levels of thinking from the fact that we can see our own outer thought from the vantage point of our inner thought. We can reflect on it as well, and decide whether it is evil or not" (*Divine Providence* §104).

There is a correspondence between the internal thought or spirit of the human being and the externals of thought. Swedenborg also described this as part of a metaphysical principle that runs through the whole of creation. The ultimate end of all things generates a cause that results in effects. In the mind, the love of a person's life is the end. It generates causes from which the affections and the perceptions serve the love of that life. The resulting effects are the externals of thought and the body's actions. A person's real end shows in what he does. In religious terms, love results in charity. End, cause, effect is the principle that has also been described as correspondence between levels of creation. The end is the inmost aspect; the effect, the outermost:

The human mind is constantly engaged with three matters called purposes, means, and results. If any of these is lacking, our mind is not engaged in its own life. The impulse of our volition is the originating purpose; the thinking of our discernment is the effectual means; and the action of the body, the speech of the mouth, or our physical sensation is the result of the purpose that is achieved through thought. . . . This means that our minds do not have their life from any one of these elements by itself, but from the three of them together.

*Divine Providence §178*

This manifesting through levels of our own existence is what we call living.

Although the internal contains a person's highest potential and the ultimate aim of his or her life, it also contains the possibility of error, or getting lost. This possibility arises out of our freedom to try things and to judge for ourselves. Swedenborg saw this ultimate shaping of the person as requiring freedom. The external cannot constrain the internal, which is its source. The external is the coming to earth, the manifesting of the internal. The internal is the ultimate of personal freedom and, as we shall see later, the connection with heaven. The experiences of life are the manifesting of the internal. A person's judging, based on experiences, is the means by which he sets his values, what he stands for.

The reason no one is reformed in a state of fear is that fear takes away our freedom and rationality, or our "freeness" and our "reasonableness." Love opens the inner reaches of the mind, but fear closes them; and when they are closed, we do very little actual thinking, being conscious then only of what is impinging on our feelings or our senses. All the fears that beset our minds are like this.

Fear can never occupy our inner thought processes. These are always in freedom because they are in our life's love.

The fear that occupies our outer thought processes and closes in the deeper ones is primarily a fear of losing rank and losing wealth.

*Divine Providence §139*

There can be a real conflict between the external and internal. The more the person acts presumptuously against the internal, the more he sets up a conflict with his own inner source. Liberty or freedom resides in the internal; thus, to stand against the internal is to block one's own freedom. Regarding the inner and the outer, Swedenborg states the following:

They act separately when we talk and act on the basis of our outer thought in ways that differ from our deeper thought and intent; and they act together when we say and do what we think and intend inwardly. The latter state is characteristic of honest people, while the former is characteristic of dishonest people.

Since the inner and outer processes of our minds are distinct, then, the inner can even fight against the outer and forcibly make it consent. . . .

Since we are human because of our inner thought, which is actually the human spirit, it follows that we are compelling ourselves when we force our outer thought processes to consent, or to accept the pleasures of our inner desires, the benefits that arise from our caring.

*Divine Providence* §145

We . . . have a freedom to think as we wish, in order that our life's love may come out of hiding into the light of our discernment; otherwise we would have no knowledge of our evil and could not abstain from it.

*Divine Providence* §281

Swedenborg described the conflict between the higher internal and the lower external as temptation or combat. The struggle itself is necessary so that a person may become conscious and decide his own values, thereby shaping his ultimate or eternal existence. We make what will always be. As the inner and outer come to act as one, the individual comes to experience the peace and freedom that is the life of the inner. One might call this integration, mental health, or well-being:

In people who are being led by heavenly love, the inner and outer processes of their thinking, their inner and outer selves, are acting in unison when they talk. There is no awareness of any distinction between them. Their life's love, together with its desires for what is good and their perceptions of what is true, is like the soul within the things they are thinking and the things they say and do as a result.

*Divine Providence* §110

All this has bearing on marital relationships. In spite of not being married, Swedenborg pondered long on the relationship of male to female. One of his last published works, *Marriage Love*, issued when he was eighty years old, is considered by many of his followers one of his greatest works. He was frank enough on the intimate aspects of marriage that this work was banned in Boston for a time! Yet by modern standards the work seems entirely elevated. He wanted to get at the psychological and spiritual aspects of the union of two persons. He answered the question of whether sex has any role in heaven:

After death every person's sexual love stays the way it was inwardly in the world—that is, as it was in his inward desire and thought. Every love follows a person after death, because it is the essence of his life. The controlling love, which is the head of all the others, remains with the person forever, and so do the subordinate loves. They remain because a

love belongs to a person's spirit and to his body from his spirit. And since a person becomes a spirit after death, he carries the love with him. . . .

As for sexual love, it is the basic one of all loves, because by creation it is placed in the person's soul itself, where the person's whole essence comes from. Sexual love is there to enlarge the human race. The reason this love especially remains is that after death men are still male and women are female, and there is nothing in the soul, mind, and body that is not male in a man and female in a woman, and these two are created in such a way that they seek to be united — united into one person; in fact this urge is the sexual love that precedes the love for marriage. Now because the inclination to join is written all over each and every thing about men and women, this means that the inclination cannot be erased and die with your body.<sup>3</sup>

*Marriage Love* §46

Swedenborg saw sexual love as a desire to join with many; marital love is a higher and purer love that needs only one. Maleness and femaleness he saw as no small accident of fate: male and female differ even in the subtlest aspects of the inner life. In fact, he saw the differences in the male and female body as representative of the inner. The male is harder, more linear, and even sexually is a thrust outward. The female is softer, more rounded, nurturing, and even sexually is softer and more inward. Feminine males and masculine women would be variants of them. In effect, the male is trying to unite with his own potential love aspect in women, and a woman is attempting to unite with her wisdom aspect in a man. There is a basic difference in the male and female approach to reality, as Swedenborg saw it: “It is masculine to perceive from intellect and feminine to perceive from love” (*Marriage Love* §168).

Swedenborg may reflect the masculine chauvinism of his time. Microscopes had only recently been developed; genetics had not been founded. And Swedenborg, like most scientists of his day, probably felt that the whole seed and heredity was from the father. The mother was simply a vessel for the development of this seed. But if we can overlook this, we can see Swedenborg's reaching for the real inward nature of love and marital relationships, puzzling out the inward necessity that binds men and women together. I recall one lovely description in which he came upon a truly married couple in heaven. They looked like one person until he got close enough to see they were two. He remarked that husband and wife meet again in heaven and see if they were truly joined inwardly. Often they are not and go their separate ways and find new and eternally compatible spouses. He wrote that Christ's statement that there is no marriage in

heaven (Luke 20: 27–28) referred to union with God, that can never take place unless a foundation is laid in this life (*Marriage Love* §41).

Swedenborg saw in sex and a love a deeper principle that operated through all creation. He often described it as the marriage of good and truth. Love is the good seeking to be made actual in truth or reality. The scholar Iungerich felt Swedenborg was describing the divine as creator (male) and sustainer of existence (female).<sup>4</sup> These are primal opposites very much like the yin-yang of the Chinese.<sup>5</sup> The creator aspect shows in the male impregnating the female, while the sustaining aspect shows in the female bearing, nursing, and caring for the child.

## **The Connection with Heaven**

So far we have not shown any real connecting link with heaven. It is clear that by the style and quality of his life the individual sets his eternal condition. But during this life on earth is there a more immediate link with the worlds beyond? There is, but it is not explicit, so that many who have studied Swedenborg would not know the link.

As we saw, in Swedenborg's terms, the innermost aspect of the individual is the love of his or her life, or the ruling love. Out of this emanate the affections, feelings, or inner tendencies, which are the ruling background of the explicit aspects of consciousness. In *Heaven and Hell*, Swedenborg said that spirits of heaven and hell interact with human beings, yet this interaction is not usually apparent, nor was it meant to be. If spirits interact inwardly in the mind of individuals, it takes place in our inner feelings. At first sight, this seems like a strange idea, that spirits are present in our feelings. But as we examine the implications of this statement, it becomes much more reasonable. The first step is to see that spirits and affections are the same thing. This is a consequence of their coming into their real inner tendencies. It is more accurate to see them as their inner ruling tendencies than to view them in their individual identities as the people they inhabit. This is part of their being beyond space and time:

[E]very angel is an affection, and also a use.

*On Divine Love and Divine Wisdom* §24

[S]pirits are affections, and therefore have a human form that resembles their affections.

*Heaven and Hell* §517

Since all spirits and angels are desires, then, we can see that the whole angelic heaven is nothing but a love that embraces all desires for what is good and therefore a wisdom that embraces all perceptions of what is true.

*Divine Providence §61*

Combine with this the fact that a person inwardly is essentially his or her affection or life's love and really has contact with heaven and hell:

[M]an's spirit is nothing but affection; consequently, that man after death becomes an affection, an angel of heaven if he be an affection of good use, and a spirit of hell if he be an affection of evil use. For this reason the whole heaven is divided into societies according to the genera and species of affections, and likewise, in an opposite manner, hell. For this it is that whether you speak of affections of or societies in the spiritual world, it is the same.

*On Divine Love and Divine Wisdom §21*

Our inner self is also called our "spiritual self," because it is in heaven's light, which is spiritual. And our outer self is called our "material self" because it is in the world's light, which is material. If our inner part is in heaven's light and our outer part is in the world's light, we are spiritual on both levels. However if our inner part is not in heaven's light, but only in the world's light (which our outer part is in as well, we are materialistic on both levels. In the Bible, spiritual people are called "living" and materialistic people are called "dead."

If our inner part is in heaven's light and our outer part is in the world's light, we think both spiritually and materially. Our spiritual thought flows into our material thought and is comprehended there. . . .

If our inner part is spiritual, we are actually angels of heaven. This means we are in a community of angels while we are living in our physical body, even if we are not aware of it. After we are freed from our physical body we associate with angels.

*Heavenly Doctrine §38–40*

When angels are with us, they seem to dwell in our affections.

*Heaven and Hell §391*

Not only are we affections in our inner being, affections that join us to societies in heaven and hell that are also affections, but Swedenborg also said specifically that spirits interact with us:

There are good spirits and evil spirits with every individual. We have our union with heaven through the good spirits and our union with hell through the evil ones. These spirits are in the World of Spirits, which is intermediate between heaven and hell. . . .

When these spirits come to us, they come into our whole memory and from there into all our thinking, evil spirits into the matters of memory and thought that are evil and good spirits into the matters of memory and thought that are good. These spirits are totally unaware that they are with us. Rather, as long as they are, they believe that all these matters of our memory and thought are actually theirs. They do not see us, either, because their sight does not extend to things in our subsolar world.

Later, when we examine psychotic hallucinations, we will see a surprising contemporary confirmation of this assertion. What Swedenborg described fits perfectly with careful phenomenological studies of inner experience.<sup>6</sup> The most primitive level of mental functioning we can observe is feelings or affections. Thought and perception follow their pattern. Swedenborg adds that spirits are affections and are present inwardly in our feelings. Everyone has good and evil spirits with him or her and is the free space poised between these opposite possibilities. Moreover, we don't have just any old spirits with us, only those that reflect our inward feeling potentials. A man of a dark disposition or inner tendency would have a spirit of like nature with him. *There is no real way of distinguishing our own potentialities and the potentialities of spirits with us.* As Albert Einstein once remarked, it is not appropriate to see as separate that which cannot be distinguished. The spirits with us and our affective potentialities are the same thing. Or, to enlarge the statement, some aspects of the spiritual worlds beyond this one are already real in us now. Or, to put this yet another way, there is a correspondence between the spiritual worlds and the mind of the human being. The specific line of correspondence in the individual is through the affective spirits with him, into his affects and thence into all other levels of his mind. But this is really how the Lord rules, through the world of spirits to the mind of the human being:

[The human being believes] that all things in him follow in natural order, and that nothing higher exists which directs them. But in actual fact every single thing is regulated by means of the spirits and angels residing with him, and all states and changes of state are brought about from this and so are being directed by the Lord forever towards ends which the Lord alone foresees.

*Arcana Coelestia* §2796

It may be difficult for some to see, but Swedenborg's explanation of mind as based on the presence of spirits is not observably different from the modern dynamic theories of the nature of mind, formed two centuries after him. In the older psychoanalysis, the mind is based in unconscious processes that are primarily affective.<sup>7</sup> Swedenborg said these inner affections are unconscious yet rule. The added element Swedenborg brought to it is a basing of these unconscious affects in spiritual worlds beyond this one. When we examine the strange world of psychotic



hallucinations, we will see that Swedenborg's description of the process is even more impressive than that of psychoanalysis.

Theories of mind shift with the trend of the times. Most current theories see the most critical tendencies of the individual as reflecting the interpersonal relations with significant others. In effect, we introject or take on the ways of the significant others we are associated with. This social introject is carried within as affective potentialities for certain kinds of behavior. Again, there is no good way of distinguishing this from what Swedenborg has to say. Swedenborg is also saying we reflect affective potentialities within. On a clinical or phenomenological level, there isn't much to distinguish Swedenborg's conception of mind from modern theories. (I don't regard this as proven here. Such a proof would require an extensive study in itself, especially since there are hundreds of modern theories.)

It is only when we search beyond what is easily observed to root causes that Swedenborg's conception of mind is radically different. He took into account whole orders of existence that have no place in most modern theories. His is really a theological psychology. The worlds of God, heaven and hell, and humanity are too intimately interrelated to Swedenborg for him to try to isolate them from each other profitably.

Ordinarily, I would say there is hardly any satisfactory way to check on the heaven and hell aspect of Swedenborg's findings, except that I accidentally stumbled upon a surprising confirmation.

## THE PRESENCE OF SPIRITS IN MADNESS<sup>1</sup>



BY AN EXTRAORDINARY SERIES OF CIRCUMSTANCES, I SEEM to have found a confirmation for one of Emanuel Swedenborg's more unusual findings: that a human being's life involves an interaction with a hierarchy of spirits. This interaction is normally not conscious, but perhaps in some cases of mental illness, it has become conscious.

For sixteen years, I worked as a clinical psychologist in one of the country's better mental hospitals (Mendocino State Hospital, Ukiah, California; now closed). Out of both my professional role and human interest, I examined thousands of mentally ill persons. An accidental discovery in 1964 permitted me to get a much more detailed and accurate picture of psychotic hallucinations than had previously been possible. Although I gradually noticed similarities between patients' reports and Swedenborg's description of the relationships of the human being to spirits, it was only three years after all my major findings on hallucinations had been made that the striking similarity between the two became apparent to me. I then collected as many details as possible of his description. I found that Swedenborg's system not only is an almost perfect fit with patients' experiences, but even more impressively, it accounts for otherwise quite puzzling aspects of hallucinations.

Mentally ill persons are out of sorts with their environment and need supervision, care, or restraint for their protection or the welfare of others. If they are very disturbed or apparently responding to invisible others, the staff may decide they are hallucinating. Most hallucinating people conceal this experience because they know it is unusual and may indicate madness. At best, our patients would tell us of a few striking hallucinations from the past. An unusually cooperative patient led me to ask if I could talk directly with her hallucinations. I did, and she gave me their immediate response. I had stumbled upon a way to get a much richer picture of the inner world of hallucinations.

I began to look for patients who could distinguish between their own thoughts and the things heard and seen. Some of the more deteriorated psychotics couldn't distinguish between themselves and hallucinations any longer. The ego had been overrun with alien forces so that there were no clear distinctions. My patients were in relatively good condition. The patients were told that I simply wanted to get as accurate a description of their experiences as possible. I held out no hope for recovery or special reward. It soon became apparent that many were embarrassed by what they saw and heard. Also, they knew their experiences were not shared by others, and some were even concerned that their reputations would suffer if they revealed the obscene nature of their voices. It took some care to make the patients comfortable enough to reveal their experience honestly. A further complication was that the voices were sometimes frightened of me and themselves needed reassurance. They felt that a psychologist might want to kill them, which was, in a sense, true! I struck up a relationship with both the patient and the persons he saw and heard. I would question these other persons directly, and instructed the patient to give a word-for-word account of what the voices answered or what was seen. In this way, I could hold long dialogues with a patient's hallucinations and record both my questions and their answers. My method was that of phenomenology. My only purpose was to describe the patient's experiences as accurately as possible. The reader may notice I treat the hallucinations as realities—that is what they are to the patient. My acting this way was part of my attempt to get as close as possible to the experience as these people felt it. I would work with a patient for as little as one hour or as long as several months of inquiry, in cases where the hallucinated world was complex enough.

Why should one believe what these patients report? The patients cooperated with me only because I was honestly trying to understand their experiences. Most of my subjects seemed fairly sensible except for their hallucinations, which invaded and interfered with their lives. On several occasions, I talked with hallucinations that the patient himself did not really understand. This was especially true when I dealt with what will be described as the higher-order hallucinations, which can be symbolically rich beyond the patient's own understanding. There was great consistency in what was reported independently by different patients. I have no reason to doubt they were reporting real experiences. They seemed to be honest people as puzzled as I was to explain what was happening to them. The differences in the experiences of schizophrenics, alcoholics, the brain-damaged, and senile were not as striking as the similarities.

One consistent finding was that patients felt they had contact with another world or order of beings. Most thought these other persons were living. All objected to the term "hallucination." Each coined his own term, such as the Other Order, the Eavesdroppers, air phone, etc.

For most individuals the hallucinations came on suddenly. One woman was working in the garden when an unseen man addressed her. Another man described sudden loud noises and voices he heard while riding in a bus. Most were frightened, and adjusted with difficulty to this new experience. All the patients described voices as having the quality of a real voice, sometimes louder, sometimes softer, than normal voices. The experience they described was quite unlike thoughts or fantasies: when things are seen they appear fully real. For instance, a patient described being awakened one night by air force officers calling him to the service of his country. He got up and was dressing when he noticed their insignia wasn't quite right, then their faces altered. With this he knew they were of the Other Order and struck one hard in the face. He hit the wall and injured his hand. He could not distinguish them from reality until he noticed the insignia. One woman saw Egypt's President Gamal Abdel Nasser sitting in a chair in my office. When I respectfully passed my hand down the back of the chair, my hand was blotted out for her by the body of President Nasser. Most patients soon realize that they are having experiences that others do not share, and for this reason learn to keep quiet about them. Many suffer insults, threats, and attacks for years from voices with no one around them aware of it.

In my dialogues with patients, I learned of two orders of experience, borrowing from the voices themselves, called the higher and the lower order. Lower-order voices are similar to drunks at a bar who like to tease and torment just for the fun of it. They suggest lewd acts and then scold the patient for considering them. They find a weak point of conscience and work on it interminably. For instance, one man heard voices teasing him for three years over a ten-cent debt he had already paid. They call the patient every conceivable name, suggest every lewd act, steal memories or ideas right out of consciousness, threaten death, and work on the patient's credibility in every way. For instance, they brag that they will produce some disaster on the morrow and then claim honor for one in the daily paper. They suggest foolish acts, such as to raise your right hand in the air and stay that way, and tease if the patient does it and threaten him if he doesn't. The lower order can work for a long time to possess some part of the patient's body. Several worked on one patient's ear, and he seemed to grow deafer. One voice worked two years to capture a patient's eye, which went visibly out of alignment. Many patients have heard loud and clear voices plotting their death for weeks on end, an apparently nerve-wracking experience. One patient saw a noose around his neck that was tied to "I don't know what," while voices plotted his death by hanging. They threaten pain and can cause felt pain as a way of enforcing their power. The most devastating experience of all is to be shouted at constantly by dozens of voices. When this occurred the patient became grossly disturbed and had to be sedated. The vocabulary and range of ideas of the lower order is limited, but they have a persistent will to destroy. They invade every nook and cranny of privacy, work on every weakness and belief, claim awesome powers, lie, make promises, and then undermine the patient's will. They never have a personal identity, though they accept most names or identities given them. They either conceal or have no awareness of personal memories. Although they claim to be separate identities, they will reveal no detail that might help to trace them as separate individuals. Their voice quality can change or shift, leaving the patient quite confused as to who might be speaking. When identified as some friend known to the patient, they can assume this voice quality perfectly. For convenience, many patients call them by nicknames, such as "Fred," "The Doctor," or "The Old-Timer." I've heard it said by the higher-order voices that the purpose of the lower order is to illuminate all of the person's weaknesses. They do that admirably and with infinite patience.

To make matters worse, they hold out promises to patients and even give helpful-sounding advice, only to catch the patient in some weakness. Even with the patient's help, I found the lower order difficult to relate to because of their disdain for me as well as the patient.

The limited vocabulary and range of ideas of the lower order are striking. A few ideas can be repeated endlessly. One voice just said "hey" for months while the patient tried to figure out whether "hey" or "hay" was meant. Even when I was supposedly speaking to an engineer that a woman heard, the engineer was unable to do any more arithmetic than simple sums and multiplication the woman had memorized. The lower-order voices seem incapable of sequential reasoning. Although they often claim to be in some distant city, they cannot report more than the patient sees, hears, or remembers. They seem imprisoned in the lowest level of the patient's mind, giving no real evidence of a personal world or of any higher-order thinking or experiencing.

All of the lower order are irreligious or antireligious. Some actively interfered with the patients' religious practices. Most patients considered them as ordinary living people, though to one patient they appeared as conventional devils and referred to themselves as demons. In a few instances, they referred to themselves as from hell. Occasionally, they would speak through the patient so that the patient's voice and speech would be directly those of the voices. Sometimes they acted through the patient. One of my female patients was found going out the hospital gate arguing loudly with her male voice that she didn't want to leave, but he was insisting. Like many others, this particular hallucination claimed to be Jesus Christ, but his bragging and argumentativeness rather gave him away as of the lower order. Sometimes the lower order is embedded in physical concerns, as in the case of a lady who was tormented by experimenters painfully treating her joints to prevent arthritis. She held out hope that they were helping her, though it was apparent to any onlooker they had all but destroyed her life as a free and intelligent person.

In direct contrast stand the rarer higher-order hallucinations. In quantity, they make up perhaps a fifth or less of the patients' experiences. This contrast may be illustrated by the experience of one man. He had heard the lower order arguing for a long while about how they would murder him. He also had a light come to him at night, like the sun. He knew it was a different order because the light respected his freedom and would withdraw

if it frightened him. In contrast, the lower order worked against his will and would attack if it could sense fear in him. This rarer higher order seldom speaks, whereas the lower order can talk endlessly. The higher order is much more likely to be symbolic, religious, supportive, genuinely instructive; it can communicate directly with the inner feelings of the patient. It is similar to Jung's archetypes, whereas the lower order is like Freud's id. I've learned to help the patient approach the higher order because of its great power to broaden the individual's values. When the man was encouraged to approach his friendly sun, he entered a world of powerful numinous experiences, in some ways more frightening than the murderers who plotted his death. In one scene, he found himself at the bottom of a long corridor with doors at the end behind which raged the powers of hell. He was about to let out these powers when a very powerful and impressive Christlike figure appeared and by direct mind-to-mind communication counseled him to leave the doors closed and follow him into other experiences that were therapeutic for him. In another instance, the higher order appeared to a man as a lovely woman who entertained him while showing him thousands of symbols. Though the patient was a high school-educated gas pipefitter, his female vision showed a knowledge of religion and myth far beyond the patient's comprehension. At the end of a very rich dialogue with her (with the patient reporting her symbols and responses), the patient asked me for a clue as to what she and I were talking about. Another example is that of a man, a member of a minority group, who gave up being useful and lived as a drunken thief. In his weeks of hallucinations, the higher order carefully instructed him on the trials of all minority groups and left him with the feeling he would like to do something for minorities.

Some patients experience both the higher and lower orders at various times and feel caught between a private heaven and hell. Many only know the attacks of the lower order. The higher order claims power over the lower order and, indeed, shows it at times, but not enough to give peace of mind to most patients. The higher order itself has indicated that the usefulness of the lower order is to illustrate and make conscious the patients' weaknesses and faults.

Although I could say much more on what the patients reported and quote extensively from dialogues with hallucinations, this is the substance of my findings. I was very early impressed by the overall similarities of what

patients reported even though they had no contact with each other. After twenty patients, there wasn't much more to be learned. I was also impressed by the similarity to the relatively little shown in the biblical accounts of possession. These patients might well be going through experiences quite similar to what others felt centuries ago.

Several things stood out as curious and puzzling. The lower order seemed strangely prevalent and limited. In the face of their claim of separate identity, their concealing or not knowing any fact (birthplace, schooling, name, personal history) that would set them apart was unusual. Their malevolence and persistence in undermining the patient was striking. And why would they consistently be nonreligious and antireligious? Just the mention of religion provoked anger or derision from them. In contrast, the higher order appeared strangely gifted, sensitive, wise, and religious. They did not conceal identity but rather would have an identity above the human. For instance, a lady of the higher order was described as "an emanation of the feminine aspect of the Divine." When I implied she was Divine, she took offense. She herself was not Divine but was an emanation of the Divine. I couldn't help but feel I was dealing with some kind of contrasting polarity of good and evil. The patients' accounts of voices trying to seize for their own some part of the body, such as eye, ear, or tongue, had a strangely ancient ring to it. Some people might suspect that my manner of questioning fed back to the patients what I wanted to hear, but I had occasion to address an audience of patients and staff in the hospital on hallucinations. Afterward, many patients I had not met came up and pressed my hand and said I had described their experiences too. As incredible as it may seem, I'm inclined to believe the above is a roughly accurate account of many patients' hallucinatory experiences.

Although I had read the works of Emanuel Swedenborg, the similarity between his account of heaven and hell and patients' experiences was not immediately apparent to me. His doctrine regarding spirits I could neither affirm or deny. It was the clear and persistent reports from patients of attempts at possession that first reminded me of biblical accounts and later of Swedenborg.

Not much was known of madness two centuries ago. Swedenborg did speculate on the matter. He sometimes described it as being too involved in one's own fantasies (*Spiritual Diary* §1752) or sometimes ascribed it to pride in one's own powers (that is, spiritual madness [*Arcana Coelestia*



§10227]). He often described possession by spirits and what they did. Hallucinations look most like what Swedenborg described under the general headings of obsessions (to be caught in false ideas) and possession (to have alien spirits acting into one's own thought, feelings, or even into one's bodily acts [*Heaven and Hell* §257]). He indicated that normally there is a barrier between these spiritual entities and a person's own consciousness. He described a hallucination and the dangers involved in the following extract:

When angels and spirits talk with us, it sounds just as audible as when we talk with each other, but it is not audible to people who are nearby, only to ourselves. This is because the speech of an angel or spirit flows first into our thought and then by an inner route into our organ of hearing so that it activates it from within. . . .

Talking with spirits is rarely allowed nowadays, though, because it is dangerous. The spirits then actually know that they are with us, which otherwise they would not; and evil spirits by nature harbor a murderous hatred for us and crave nothing less than our total destruction, body and soul. This is what actually goes on in people who regularly lose themselves in fantasies, even to the point that they lose touch with the pleasures appropriate to their natural person.

There are some people who lead solitary lives who sometimes hear spirits talking with them without risk.

*Heaven and Hell* §248–249

If evil spirits knew they were with a person, they would do all sorts of things to torment him and destroy his life. What Swedenborg described looks remarkably like my own findings on the lower-order hallucinations. Let us consider lower-order hallucinations and possession by evil spirits together. You will recall that I said lower-order hallucinations act against the patient's will, and are extremely verbal, persistent, attacking, and malevolent. They use trickery to deceive the patient as to their powers, and threaten, cajole, entreat, and undermine in every conceivable way. These are all characteristics of possession by evil spirits, which takes place when the spirits are no longer unconscious, but have some awareness of themselves as separate entities and act into consciousness.

It is not clear how the awareness barrier between spirits and the patient is broken. In Swedenborg's case, he apparently did it deliberately with his practice of inward concentration and trances. Swedenborg described his experience as a special gift from the Lord, in which he could be tormented like others and yet be protected from harm (*Spiritual Diary* §3963). In the context of his whole system of thought, one would surmise this inner barrier of awareness is penetrated when the person habitually withdraws from

social usefulness into inner fantasy and pride. This would conform to contemporary social withdrawal, which is the earliest aspect of schizophrenia. I am relatively certain that religious faith alone doesn't prevent hallucinations because many patients try to save themselves by religious practices. Observation would suggest useful social acts, charity, would come closer to preventing schizophrenia.

All of Swedenborg's observations on the effect of evil spirits entering a person's consciousness conform to my findings. The most fundamental one is that they attempt to destroy the person (*Arcana Coelestia* §§6192, 4227). They can cause anxiety or pain (*Arcana Coelestia* §6202). They speak in the person's native tongue (*Marriage Love* §326, *Divine Providence* §135). (The only instances I could find where hallucinations seemed to know a language other than the patient's were in the higher order.) They seek to destroy conscience (*Arcana Coelestia* §1983) and seem to be against every higher value. For instance, they interfere with reading or religious practices. They suggest acts against the patient's conscience and, if refused, threaten, make them seem plausible, or do anything to overcome the patient's resistance. Swedenborg said these spirits can impersonate and deceive (*Spiritual Diary* §2687). This accounts for one puzzling aspect. Patients say voices can shift voice quality and identity as they speak, making it impossible to identify them. Or, if a patient treats them as some known individual, they will act like that person. The voices lie (*Spiritual Diary* §1622). Most patients who have experienced voices for any length of time come to recognize this. They tell a patient he will die tomorrow, and yet he lives. They claim to be anyone, including the Holy Spirit (*Heaven and Hell* §249). It took some while for a woman patient to come to realize the male voice in her probably was not Jesus Christ, as it claimed. She considered him sick and proceeded to counsel this voice, which improved and left her! He claimed he could read my mind, but I showed her by a simple experiment that he couldn't.

When spirits begin to speak with man, he must beware lest he believe them in anything; for they say almost anything; things are fabricated by them, and they lie; for if they were permitted to relate what heaven is, and how things are in the heavens, they would tell so many lies, and indeed with a solemn affirmation, that man would be astonished. . . . They are extremely fond of fabricating: and whenever any subject of discourse is proposed, they think that they know it, and give their opinions one after another, one in one way, and another in another, altogether as if they knew; and if a man listens and believes, they press on, and deceive, and seduce in divers ways.

Although most patients tend to recognize this, many still put faith in their voices and remain caught by them. For instance, one woman felt a group of scientists, including a physician and engineer, was doing important but painful experiments on the ends of her bones. Even though I couldn't find a trace of medical knowledge in the physician or any mathematical ability above simple sums in the engineer, she continued to believe in them.

Many voices have indicated they will take over the world, or have already done so, which bit of bragging Swedenborg noticed too (*Spiritual Diary* §4476). I asked one lower-order voice what his real aims were. He candidly said, "Fight, screw, win the world." They can suggest and try to enforce strange acts in the patient and then condemn him for compliance:

Man in no sense produces any falsity and evil from himself. Instead it is the evil spirits residing with him who produce them, and as they do so they also convince him that these originate in himself. Such is the nature of their wickedness. And what is more, the moment they instill this into him and convince him, they also accuse and condemn him. This I can confirm from a multitude of experiences.

*Arcana Coelestia* §761

They draw attention to things sexual or simply filthy (*Spiritual Diary* §2852) and then proceed to condemn the person for noticing them. They often refer to the person as just an automation or machine. This, too, we find in Swedenborg:

Thus men walk about as machines; they are nothing in the eyes of spirits; and if they know one to be a man, and also a spirit, they would look upon him as an inanimate machine, while the man all the time supposes himself to be living and thinking, and the spirit to be nothing.

*Spiritual Diary* §3633

That a person is an automaton is a common psychotic delusion, arising out of hallucinated experience. In the normal condition, these spirits cannot see and hear the world of the human being (*Arcana Coelestia* §1880); but in mental illness, they can (*Spiritual Diary* §3963). For instance, I was able to give the Rorschach inkblot test to a patient's voices separately from the patient's own responses. Incidentally, the lower-order hallucinations appeared to be much sicker than the patient. Since I could talk with them through the patient's hearing, they could hear what the patient heard.

Although they seem to have the same sensory experience as the patient, I could find no evidence they could see or hear things remote from the patient's senses, as they often claimed.

There are a number of peculiar traits of the lower-order hallucinations on which Swedenborg threw light. If voices are merely the patient's unconscious coming forth, I would have no reason to expect them to be particularly for or against religion. Yet the lower order can be counted on to give its most scurrilous comments to any suggestions of religion. They either totally deny any afterlife or oppose God and all religious practices (*Arcana Coelestia* §6197). Once I asked if they were spirits, and they answered, "The only spirits around here are in bottles" (followed by raucous laughter). To Swedenborg, it is their opposition to God, religion, and all that this implies that makes them what they are.

Another peculiar finding is that the lower-order hallucinations were somehow bound to and limited within the patient's own experiences (*Arcana Coelestia* §796f). The lower order could not reason sequentially or think abstractly as could the higher order. Also, it seemed limited within the patient's own memory. For instance, one group of voices could attack the patient only for things he had recalled since they invaded him; and they were most anxious to get any dirt to use against him. Swedenborg throws light on this when he indicates that one class of evil spirits is limited to man's memory (*Heaven and Hell* §§292, 298). This accounts for its memory limitations, its lack of sequential and abstract reasoning, and its extreme repetitiveness. As I indicated earlier, it is not uncommon for voices to attack a person for years over a single past guilt. It also accounts for the very verbal quality of the lower order as against the higher order's frequent inability to speak at all (*Marriage Love* §326).

Swedenborg indicated the possibility of spirits acting through the subject (*Arcana Coelestia* §5990), which was to possess him. This I have occasionally seen. For instance, the man who thought he was Christ within a woman sometimes spoke through her, at which times her voice was unnaturally rough and deep. She also had trouble with him dressing at the same time she was, because she would be caught in the incongruities of doing two different acts at once.

Another peculiar finding that Swedenborg unintentionally explained is my consistent experience that lower-order hallucinations act as though they are separate individuals and yet can in no way reveal even a trace of

personal identity. Nor can they produce anything more than was in the patient's memory. This strange but consistent finding is clarified by Swedenborg's account. These lower-order spirits enter a person's memory and lose all personal memory. Their personal memory was taken off at their death, leaving their more interior aspects. That they discover they are other than the person they are inhabiting allows obsession and possession to take place and accounts for their claiming separate identity and convincing the patient of this. But their actual lack of personal memory comes from their taking on the patient's own.

It may be that, in the deeper degree of schizophrenia, the spirits have taken on more of their own memory. Swedenborg said that this would lead a person to believe he had done what he had not done (*Arcana Coelestia* §2478, *Heaven and Hell* §256). For instance, delusional ideas are a belief in what has not occurred. Some patients spoke of themselves as dead and buried and their present identity as of another person. "For were spirits to retain their corporeal memory, they would so far obsess man, that he would have no more self-control or be in the enjoyment of his life, than one actually obsessed" (*Spiritual Diary* §3783). I am just guessing at this point that the most serious mental disorders—where a person is totally out of contact and jabbars to himself and gesticulates strangely—are instances where these spirits have more memory and act more thoroughly through the person. It is then symbolically accurate that the patient is dead and someone else lives.

I deliberately looked for some discrepancy between my patients' experiences and Swedenborg's descriptions. I appeared to have found it in the number of spirits who were with one patient. Patients may have three or four most frequent voices, but they can experience a number of different people. Swedenborg said there are usually only two good and two evil spirits with a person (*Arcana Coelestia* §§904, 5470, 5848, 6189). He also gave instances where spirits come in clouds of people at a time (*Spiritual Diary* §4546). I later learned that where there is a split between the internal and external experience of a person, as in schizophrenia, there can be many spirits with a person (*Spiritual Diary* §160). Also, as patients' voices themselves have described the situation, one spirit can be the subject or voice of many (*Heaven and Hell* §601). This was the case with the woman who had the researchers working on her bones. They themselves were in a kind of hierarchy and represented many. Only the lowest few members of

the hierarchy became known to the patient and myself. Swedenborg referred to such spirits as the subjects of many.

Both Swedenborg and medieval literature spoke of the aim of spirits to possess and control some part of a patient's body (*Spiritual Diary* §§1751, 2656, 4910, 5569). Parts involved in my observations have been the ear, eye, tongue, and genitals. Medieval literature speaks of intercourse between a person and his or her possessing spirit, giving these spirits the names "incubi" and "succubi," depending on their sex. One female patient described her sexual relations with her male spirit as both more pleasurable and more inward than normal intercourse. Swedenborg made it clear that those who enter the affections or emotions enter thereby into all things of the body. These more subtle possessions are more powerful than simply having voices talking to one and can easily account for affective psychoses where there is a serious mood change (*Spiritual Diary* §5981). One older woman was depressed by tiny devils who tormented her in her genital region and made her feel the horror of hell.

Both possession and the experimental way in which Swedenborg entered these experiences is illustrated by the following:

It is well known from the Word that the prophets received influx from the world of spirits and from heaven. It came to them partly through dreams, partly through visions, and partly through utterances. With some prophets it also entered into their own speech and gestures, thus things of the body; and when this happened neither their utterances nor their actions were their own but were those of the spirits who occupied their bodies at the time. Some behaved as though they were insane, as when Saul lay down naked, some inflicted wounds on themselves and other wore horns; and there are many other examples of the same thing.

Having the desire to know how spirits led them to do those things, I was shown through actual experience. So that I might know, I was possessed for a whole night by spirits who occupied my bodily powers so fully that I could not feel it was my own body except in a very vague way.

*Arcana Coelestia* §6212

In Swedenborg's terms, the higher-order spirits would be angels who come to assist the person. As Swedenborg described it, they reside in the interior mind, which does not think in words but in universals that comprise many particulars (see *Arcana Coelestia* §5614):

The language of angels is also full of wisdom, since it flows from the deepest levels of their thought and their deeper thought is wisdom the way their deeper affection is love. Their love and wisdom unite in speech. As a result, it is so full of wisdom that they can in a single word express what we cannot say in a thousand words; and the concepts of their thinking can

encompass things the like of which we cannot grasp, let alone articulate. This is why the things that have been heard and seen in heaven are called inexpressible, such as ear has never heard, nor eye seen.

I have been granted knowledge of this through experience as well. At times I have been conveyed into the state in which angels are and have talked with them in that state. At such times I understood everything but when I returned to my original state and therefore into the normal processes of physical consciousness and wanted to recall what I had heard, I could not. There were a thousand things that would not fit into natural ideas and were therefore inexpressible except by subtle shifts of heavenly light, and not at all, then, in human words.

*Heaven and Hell* §239

This is true not only in heaven but in the interior of mind too:

A person's interior mind . . . does not rely, when it is engaged in thought, on verbal expressions belonging to any language. Consequently it does not rely on any natural forms. This may be recognized by anyone who is able to stop and reflect on these matters; for he can in an instant see in his mind what he can hardly express verbally in an hour, by the use of general observations which include very many details. The ideas constituting his thought are spiritual ones. . . .

*Arcana Coelestia* §5614

The higher order in one patient showed him visually hundreds of universal symbols in the space of one hour. Although he found them entertaining, he couldn't understand their meaning. One patient described a higher-order spirit who appeared all in white, radiant, very powerful in his presence, and who communicated directly with the spirit of the patient to guide him out of his hell. Swedenborg too described how the influx of angels gently leads to good and leaves the person in freedom (*Arcana Coelestia* §6205). I've described the incident where the patient recognized good forces first as a sun that withdrew from him when he was frightened, whereas all his experiences of the lower order had been attacking ones. It was this simple respect for his freedom that led the patient to believe this was another order.

Swedenborg indicated that good spirits have some degree of control over the evil ones (*Arcana Coelestia* §§5992, 6308; *Spiritual Diary* §3525). Higher-order hallucinations have made the same comment—that they can control lower-order ones—but it is seldom to the degree the patient would desire. In some respects, they overcome the evil insofar as the patient identifies with them. In one case, I encouraged the patient to become acquainted with these helpful forces that tended to frighten him. When he did so, their values merged into him, and the evil plotters, who had been saying for months they would kill him, disappeared. I seem to see some

kind of control of the higher order over the lower, though the nature and conditions of this control are not yet clear. Again, and precisely in agreement with Swedenborg, I found evil spirits cannot see the good ones, but the good can the evil (*Heaven and Hell* §583). The lower order may know of the presence of the higher order but cannot see it.

Why the higher-order hallucinations were rarer remained a considerable puzzle to me for over a year, since they were far more interesting to the patient and myself and potentially more therapeutic. Again, Swedenborg has an explanation that fits beautifully with my findings. I have noticed the higher order tends to be nonverbal and highly symbolic. He indicated that angels possess the inner dimensions of the human being. Their influx is tacit. It does not stir up material ideas or memories but is directed to the person's ends or inner motives (*Arcana Coelestia* §§5854, 6193, 6209). It is for this reason not so apparent and hence rarer in the patients' reports.

What are we to make of this similarity? I am personally convinced that Swedenborg and contemporary hallucinating persons are describing the same general experiences. There are just too many similarities to believe otherwise. Yet it is in itself remarkable that Swedenborg and persons separated by different cultures, different assumptions of the world, different experiences, and two centuries of time could so describe inner experiences alike. One implication is that this inner world may be very stable and consistent over centuries of time, certainly more consistent than the outer natural world.

Could Swedenborg have been mad? There is simply no evidence for this. In contrast to the limited, impaired, unproductive lives of these patients, his life was one of the richest and most productive ever lived. He explored voluntarily what patients are involuntarily thrown into.

None of these psychotics sought these experiences. They had all tried everything they could think of to stop the hallucinations—prayer, diet, obeying the voices, disregarding the voices, etc. Nothing worked. Even when extrasensory perception turned up, it simply convinced them of the power of the “others” and frightened them. For every pleasant moment in this inner world, there was so much misery that most did not want to have these experiences. In contrast, Swedenborg sought to penetrate the inner world. He carefully recorded it and made great use of it.

It appears that psychotics, alienated from their own feelings and inner processes, find these processes represented around them in a different form.



I'll illustrate by a humorous example. The same man who had a very gifted female spirit enlivening his life came in one day and complained of having female breasts. They got in the way of his work. He wasn't so crazy that he didn't know that others couldn't see the breasts. Yet he could, and it annoyed him. I asked him to describe the breasts. One side was well shaped, the other pendulous and not so attractive. I asked if he could associate with them. Yes. The well-shaped side reminded him of a new girlfriend. The less attractive pendulous side reminded him of an old girlfriend toward whom he still felt obligated. I said he should make up his mind between them. He did, and the breasts disappeared. Hallucinations were rarely this easily cured; but over and over, I had the impression that they represented unknown potentials in the patient. The hell side illustrated personal faults, blindness, and stupidity. The heaven side represented higher, unused gifts. There were no hallucinations at the patients' average level of functioning. They were either far more limited or more gifted than the patient. They appear to be unrealized, unlived-out potentials, spilling out to confuse the environment. A saintly female patient heard vile voices. The drunken burglar was shown a detailed and sensitive history of minority groups. In this sense, these people seemed to have too much unused, unrecognized unconscious, which lived anyway and confused their environment. So my impressions conform to the general ideas of the unconscious.

Yet it is much more than that. There are demons that can plague a person and try to possess him. There are also higher spirits whose wisdom is very great. In the head of the uneducated gas pipefitter was the most gifted woman I've ever known. Quite to his surprise and faint amusement, he found universal symbols all over the room. My guess is that the spiritual world is much as Swedenborg described it, and is the unconscious. We are mostly unconscious of the other spiritual worlds. It is meant to be that way, for it is very dangerous when these worlds are opened up to a person, just as Swedenborg said. He did not advocate that anyone try to follow him.

My guess is that Swedenborg systematically explored the same worlds that psychotic patients find themselves thrust into, and these worlds are heaven and hell, the worlds beyond this one, inside this one. It is not too surprising, when you think of it, that persons who are disordered inwardly experience some of the raw underpinnings of experience that are invisible to the smoothly functioning mind.

To help us understand this phenomenon fully, let me describe what it would be like to be possessed in the normal sense. Swedenborg said that we all have spirits with us; they are part of the foundation and energy of mental processes. What would their presence be like in the normal mind that is not alienated from its own nature, as in the patients' cases? Even though outwardly occupied in some normal train of thought and action, the lower order would appear as an impulse to think of some sexual, hostile, or other emotional scene. The impulse would feel like your own, but arise contrary to what you thought you were choosing. In religious terms, this is called temptation. At the point of choosing one line of experience and stumbling on another within, you feel that you can choose which one to dwell on. If you choose to put down the sexual, it could arise again and again, that is, the temptation wouldn't disappear easily. And what would the interaction with angels be like? It could be finding yourself drifting into considering the quality of your conduct or to understanding your life or life itself in a broader way. This is the normal aspect of what the patients experienced in a more intense form. Most mental experience is participated in by spirits who don't know themselves as anything other than the patient's own feelings. Honed down to this fine level, the only thing left that is really yours is the struggle to choose. Those who aren't choosing are going the way the spiritual winds blow. So, the pitiful picture of the hallucinated psychotic is really an exaggerated picture of everyone's situation.

## MINOR MIRACLES



IT IS NATURAL TO LOOK WITH SOME INCREDULITY on Emanuel Swedenborg's claims. We would like some further confirmation that he really had reached other worlds. A number of incidents tend to provide such confirmation. In addition to everything else, Swedenborg had apparently been given a way to knowledge not often given to mortals. Yet he considered his new powers of so little account that he didn't even bother to mention them in his writings—even though he seemed to have recorded everything else. The confirmatory incidents I shall report here were all recorded out of the amazement of others.<sup>1</sup> Rather than let these somewhat miraculous incidents stand as evidence or proof that Swedenborg had indeed reached other worlds, I prefer to show them for their implications on the nature of reality and the inner nature of this man's personal experience. Proof for Swedenborg appropriately rested on how well what he had to say fit with human experience and biblical revelation. These are internal or spiritual evidences. These little miracles, though very curious, are not really proof of anything.

If Swedenborg had felt that a public display of his powers would further the welfare of others, he probably would have displayed them widely. In several places, he said that miracles have a coercive effect on belief and destroy the free will in spiritual matters (*True Christian Religion* §§501,

849). Only choices made in freedom really affect the individual's eternal nature and destiny. Impressive, miraculous events tend to affect the externals of belief. In time the internal, freely chosen path comes to rule and even miraculous events are washed away in the current of time and forgotten. Indeed, one of the incidents is an example of this. Swedenborg accidentally showed his powers to John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. Wesley was very impressed for a while, but later joined others in rejecting Swedenborg. Miracles only impress when they demonstrate what are already the essentials of a person's beliefs. So Swedenborg mostly concealed his unusual powers; they were discovered by others almost by accident.

There were several clear indications that Swedenborg did not want to be an impressive public figure. His most valuable writings were issued anonymously until near the end of his life. (Only his printers knew their author.) Moreover, these sublime works were sold at less than the cost of printing (Docs II, 496). He lived a quiet, scholarly life, going to the court or parties occasionally. He had a speech impediment and would often stammer so that the listener had to be patient and wait for the great man to get it out. Those who stammer are sensitive to the impact of social intercourse. The more tense and anxious the situation, the more they worry if they will stammer and the more they do. Swedenborg probably had a partial impediment that tended to disappear in relaxed company with friends. He never sought any public position other than his job as assessor of mines for Sweden. He had turned down a professorship. His whole adult life was to be spent in inner exploration and writing, which suited his nature, where he was comfortable. Left to his own devices, he was a quiet scholar in seedy clothes.

Further, when it became known that Swedenborg had unusual powers, an unpleasant flap was raised. There was much talk and rumor about what he had or hadn't done. Rumor serves the personal needs of those who carry it, and an incident becomes distorted in the direction of these needs.

So Swedenborg had plenty of reason to play down these powers. Their use here is to show what is possible and to illustrate the inner experience of the expert on inner experience.

On July 17, 1759, Swedenborg and fifteen others were guests of the prominent merchant William Castel in Gothenberg at his fine home on Canal Street. At six o'clock in the evening, Swedenborg appeared quite pale

and alarmed. When asked what was wrong, he described a fire burning at that moment in Stockholm, three hundred miles away. Evidently agitated by the fire, he paced in and out of the house. His detailed description and evident sincerity upset the guests, many of whom were from Stockholm. Swedenborg described exactly where the fire was burning, where it had started and when, and was dismayed to see a friend's house already in ashes. The next day, Sunday, the governor, having heard of the incident, asked to see Swedenborg and received a detailed report. The news spread through Gothenberg. Two days after the fire, messengers arrived and confirmed every detail as Swedenborg had reported it, including when and how it started, what it burned, and where and when it was contained (Docs II, 628 f.). There were several separate reports of this incident that agreed on essentials. Even the German philosopher Immanuel Kant was impressed and sent his own agent to check the details.

This was the first incident. If it had not been for his evident alarm, Swedenborg, now seventy-one, might have continued to conceal this extrasensory power. But the cat was out of the bag. Rumor started. A few began to suspect that he might even be the anonymous author of the extraordinary works on heaven and hell. People started asking questions about the spiritual world. He felt privileged to know so much and obliged to share it with others. He would answer simply and directly any questions, often referring to recent meetings with departed figures. People reacted as one might expect. Some were pleased to get such direct answers bearing on important matters. Others were surprised that this old man could look and act so sane and yet be so crazy. Evidently, Swedenborg refused to check on departed friends just to satisfy curiosity. He said that this world and the spiritual world were separated for good reason. Apparently, he would search in heaven or hell if the inquirer had a sufficiently weighty reason, as in the next two incidents.

In April or May 1761, a countesse de Marteville came to Swedenborg. Her husband, M. de Marteville, ambassador extraordinary of The Netherlands, had died in Sweden. He had given her a valuable silver service before he died. Now the silversmith was demanding a payment she could not afford, even though she was sure her husband had paid for it. The matter was urgent to the woman. She had heard Swedenborg could contact the souls of the departed. Would he contact her husband and ask of the receipt? Swedenborg said he would. Three days later, he returned and said he had

spoken with her husband. The receipt was in a bureau upstairs. The woman said she had already searched the bureau. The husband had told Swedenborg that a certain drawer was to be pulled out and a false back removed. The woman and her company went upstairs and found the receipt and other lost papers as directed. This incident was related by eleven different sources, most of whom agreed on the above account (Docs II, 633 f.). When questioned on the matter, Swedenborg also affirmed its occurrence.

The next corroborated incident occurred several months later. Queen Louisa Ulrica of Sweden had heard of Swedenborg. She asked Count Scheffer about this man who pretended to talk with the dead. Was he perhaps mad? Count Scheffer knew Swedenborg and replied he was quite sane. He promised to bring him to court. Swedenborg went to court in his nobleman's finery, powdered wig and dress sword. After the queen chatted with foreign ambassadors and other dignitaries, Count Scheffer introduced Swedenborg to her. She asked whether he could really converse with the deceased. He answered yes. She asked if this skill could be learned by others. He said it couldn't, that it was a gift of the Lord. After some further conversation, the queen asked him to take a commission to her brother. The queen, the king, Count Scheffer, and Swedenborg adjourned to a quiet spot where the queen gave Swedenborg her message. The queen and her brother had been separated by tragedy because their countries were at war with each other when he died. Afterward, the party dined at the royal table, where Emanuel patiently answered many questions of the spiritual world. Many observers felt the queen had not really asked anything very serious of Swedenborg because she didn't really believe in his powers.

Some time afterward, Count Scheffer again brought Swedenborg to court. He met the queen in her White Room surrounded by ladies-in-waiting. She lightly asked if he had a message from her brother. Swedenborg answered yes and suggested that they speak alone, and he related what he had learned from the queen's brother. The queen was variously described as in shock, disturbed, or so indisposed that she had to retire. She said later that Swedenborg had reported what no other living person knew. Swedenborg's servants reported that for days all the great people of the realm came in carriages to learn the queen's secret, but he did not reveal it (Docs II, 647–666).

Later a reporter asked the queen of the incident, and she affirmed it. The royal person was described as no weak-minded woman. “Nevertheless, she appeared to me so convinced of Swedenborg’s supernatural intercourse with spirits, that I scarcely durst venture to intimate any doubts . . . and a royal air—‘Je ne suis pas facilement dupée’ (I am not easily fooled), put an end to all my attempts at refutation” (Docs II, 649).

This particular incident was talked about the most, so there are more sources for it, including the queen herself. When Swedenborg was asked of the incident, he said it was true, “but he did not dwell upon [it] observing that there were hundreds of similar stories; but he did not think it worth while to waste many words upon them; saying that all these things were trifles . . . in the shade of the great object of his mission” (Docs II, 648). His mission was to bring to people the real nature of the spiritual and open up the meanings in the Bible. Alongside this, these were just curious stories.

The next story came from a Dr. Krohl who was reported to be a trustworthy gentleman. It fits with what is already known of Swedenborg. In the 1760s, there was a very popular game of cards called Tresett:

One day a certain prelate, Archbishop Troilus, whose greatest pleasure consisted in playing the game of Tresett and who had lately lost one of his gambling friends, Erland Broman, met Swedenborg a short time after Broman’s death in a large company, where he wished to amuse himself and the rest of the company at Swedenborg’s expense. He asked him therefore in a jocular tone, “Bye the bye, assessor, tell us something about the spirit world. How does my friend Broman spend his time there?” Swedenborg answered instantly, “I saw him but a few hours ago shuffling his cards in the company of the evil one, and he was only waiting for your worship to make up a game of Tresett.” The conversation between the archbishop and Swedenborg was thus brought to a close, and it is not difficult to see which of the two became the subject of the company’s mirth.

Docs III, 725

It apparently didn’t pay to fool around with a man who had contact with heaven and hell! The archbishop was ultraorthodox and distinguished himself by the severe measures he undertook to suppress superstition (Docs III, 1246).

In the early 1800s, an effort was made to collect anecdotes on Swedenborg. The next one was recounted by a Professor Scherer, professor of French at the University of Tübingen. Scherer was a French diplomat when he met Swedenborg. Though he witnessed the following incident, he did not believe in Swedenborg’s spiritual powers:

The professor who was greatly advanced in years, then told us, that “in Stockholm, in all companies, very much was said concerning the spirit-seer Swedenborg, and wonderful things were recorded respecting his intercourse with spirits and angels. But the judgment pronounced concerning him was various. Some gave full credit to his visions; others passed them by as incomprehensible; and others rejected them as fanatical; but he himself [Scherer] had never been able to believe them. Swedenborg, however, on account of his excellent character, was universally held in high estimation.”

Amongst other things Professor Scherer related the following remarkable occurrence: Swedenborg was one evening in company in Stockholm, when, after his information about the world of spirits had been heard with the greatest attention, they put him to the proof as to the credibility of his extraordinary spiritual communications. The test was this: He should state, which of the company would die first. Swedenborg did not refuse to answer this question, but after some time, in which he appeared to be in profound and silent meditation, he quite openly replied, “Olof Olofsohn will die tomorrow morning at forty-five minutes past four o’clock.” By this predictive declaration, which was pronounced by Swedenborg with all confidence, the company were placed in anxious expectation, and a gentleman who was a friend of Olof Olofsohn, resolved to go on the following morning at the time mentioned by Swedenborg, to the house of Olofsohn, to see whether Swedenborg’s prediction was fulfilled. On the way thither he met the well-known servant of Olofsohn, who told him that his master had just then died; a fit of apoplexy had seized him, and had suddenly put an end to his life. . . . The clock in Olofsohn’s dwelling apartment stopped at the very minute in which he had expired, and the hand pointed to the time.

Docs III, 716–717

Emperor Peter III of Russia had fallen from power to be replaced by Empress Catherine, his wife. Peter was strangled ignominiously in a prison at Kopscha, Russia. At the same time, Swedenborg was attending a party in Amsterdam. In the middle of a conversation, he seemed to change radically. He was no longer aware of those around him. When he recovered, he was asked what had happened. At first, he refused to tell it. After much coaxing, he described in a somber and convincing manner the death of Peter III, asking that the partygoers note the date and his description so they might later compare it with the newspaper account. In a few days, the newspapers carried the story (Docs II, 490).

Christopher Springer was a noted Swedish politician and a old friend of Swedenborg. Springer had been a major figure in some secret negotiations between Sweden and Prussia. Some years after Swedenborg’s death, he testified that the seer showed he knew precisely how the negotiations had taken place, who was present, what money was offered, etc., although such details had been a closely guarded secret. Springer noted that Swedenborg knew a great deal more besides. Springer was surprised that Swedenborg held him in such favor. It appeared to arise from the fact that Swedenborg



knew not only what he did, but the good intentions behind Springer's diplomatic acts (Docs II, 533).

Swedenborg made many voyages by sailing ships. Voyaging in his time was a much more uncertain affair than it is now. Weather couldn't be predicted very well, a ship might or might not have a fast passage, and marine disaster was common enough. Swedenborg indicated that he did not fear a voyage, for he had angels with him. Somehow, moreover, when the enlightened Swedenborg was aboard, the vessel was likely to have an unusually swift passage. We cannot really determine whether or not this was mere chance. But at least he acquired a reputation that made sea captains happy to see him come aboard. Once a passenger expressed doubts about the odd Swedenborg who went into trances in his cabin. The captain was a more practical man. What Swedenborg did in his cabin was no matter to him; he paid his fare, was congenial, and brought a fair wind with him. This was sufficient for a practical-minded man.

There is a clear indication that at least on one occasion Swedenborg knew precisely when the vessel would conclude a long voyage under the uncertain influence of winds. The following incident was found in a letter from Christopher Springer, Swedenborg's friend, to Abbé Perrnety:

I will now relate to you some things which I have seen and heard. Fifteen years ago Swedenborg set out for Sweden and asked me to procure a good captain for him, which I did. I contracted with one whose name was Dixon. Swedenborg's luggage was taken on board the vessel; and as his apartments were at some distance from the docks, we engaged lodgings for the night in an inn near the harbour, as the captain above-named was to call for him in the morning. He went to bed, and I sat in another room with the landlord, with whom I conversed. We heard a noise; and not being able to tell the cause, we approached a door, which had a little window looking into the room where Swedenborg was sleeping. We saw him with his hands raised towards heaven, and his body apparently very much agitated. He spoke much for half-an-hour, but we could not understand what he was saying, except when he dropped his hands, when we heard him say with a loud voice, "My God!" but could not hear more. He remained very quietly in bed. I stepped into his room with the landlord, and asked whether he was ill. "No," said he, "but I have had a long discourse with the angels and the heavenly friends, and am at this time in a great perspiration." As his things had been taken on board, he asked the landlord for a fresh shirt and a fresh sheet. Afterwards he went to bed again, and slept till morning.

When the captain of the vessel called for Swedenborg, I took leave of him, and wished him a happy journey: having asked the captain, if he had a good supply of provisions on board, he answered me that he had as much as would be required. Swedenborg then observed, "My friend, we have not need of a great quantity; for this day week we shall, by the aid of God, enter into the port of Stockholm at two o'clock." On Captain Dixon's return, he related to me that this happened exactly as Swedenborg had foretold.

Docs II, 531–532.

Again, Swedenborg showed he knew the future. The voyage from London to Stockholm had been made in a square-rigged ship. If you look at the map, it is not a straight, simple journey but one with many changes of course over quite a distance. In a letter to a Dr. Beyer, Swedenborg described the voyage, "The trip from England was made in eight days; a favourable wind increasing to a perfect storm carried the ship along in style" (Docs II, 250). Of more interest is the description of Swedenborg in a trance. He talked unclearly and gestured visibly. It is also to be noted that, when he came out of the trance, he was perfectly oriented to this world. I cannot account for the heavy perspiration, but it has been observed by others in trance states. There is a legend that Buddha became very hot during his great vision under the Bodhi Tree. Nature came to help him: snails crawled over his head to cool him. In some representations of Buddha, many knobs on the head represent these snails.

An example of Swedenborg's clairvoyance was given by Madame A. A. De Frese, wife of a Captain Carl George De Frese and granddaughter of the manufacturer Bolander of Gottenburg:

In a large company assembled in Gottenburg about 1770 in honour of Swedenborg, there was present the manufacturer Bolander, who was the owner of very extensive cloth-mills. During dinner Swedenborg suddenly turned to Mr. Bolander, and said to him sharply: "Sir, you had better go to your mills!" Mr. Bolander was very much surprised at the tone of voice in which Swedenborg spoke to him, and thought it anything but polite; but he rose nevertheless from the table, and went to his mills. On arriving there he found that a large piece of cloth had fallen down near the furnace, and had commenced burning. If he had delayed but a little longer, he would have found his property in ashes. After removing the danger, Mr. Bolander returned to the company and expressed his thanks to Swedenborg, telling him what had happened. Swedenborg smiled, and said that he had seen the danger, and also that there was no time to be lost, whereby he had addressed him thus abruptly. Docs III, 724

Two more examples cover the known minor miracles that Swedenborg was involved in. There was a John Henry Jung, called Stilling, born in 1740. He was a self-made man, having risen from a tailor's apprentice to professor of political economy and later a privy councillor (Docs III, 1163–1164). Jung-Stilling felt Swedenborg was possessed by spirits and that he ought to have resisted them. Swedenborg was well acquainted with the possibility of possession. He described himself as not possessed, but simply given the chance to explore the spiritual world. Jung-Stilling gave an

account of another incident that would otherwise have been forgotten, vouching for it with the greatest certainty.

About the year 1770, there was a merchant in Elberfeld, with whom, during my seven years of my residence there, I lived in close intimacy. He was a strict mystic in the purest sense. He spoke little; but what he said, was like golden fruit on a salver of silver. He would not have dared, for all the world, knowingly to have told a falsehood. This friend of mine, who has long ago left this world for a better, related to me the following anecdote:

His business required him to take a journey to Amsterdam, where Swedenborg at that time resided; and having heard and read much of this singular man, he formed the intention of visiting him, and becoming better acquainted with him. He therefore called upon him, and found a very venerable-looking friendly old man, who received him politely, and requested him to be seated; on which the following conversation began:

*Merchant.* Having been called hither by business, I could not deny myself the honour, Sir, of paying my respects to you: Your writings have caused me to regard you as a very remarkable man.

*Swedenborg.* May I ask where you are from?

*Merchant.* I am from Elberfeld, in the duchy of Berg. Your writings contain so much that is beautiful and edifying, that they have made a deep impression upon me: but the source from whence you derive them is so extraordinary, so strange and uncommon, that you will perhaps not take it amiss of a sincere friend of truth, if he desires incontestable proofs that you really have intercourse with the spiritual world.

*Swedenborg.* It would be very unreasonable if I took it amiss; but I think I have given sufficient proofs, which cannot be contradicted.

*Merchant.* Are these the well-known ones, respecting the Queen, the fire in Stockholm, and the receipt?

*Swedenborg.* Yes, those are they, and they are true.

*Merchant.* And yet many objections are brought against them. Might I venture to propose, that you give me a similar proof?

*Swedenborg.* Why not? Most willingly!

*Merchant.* I had formerly a friend, who studied divinity at Duisberg, where he fell into consumption, of which he died. I visited this friend, a short time before his decease; we conversed together on an important topic: could you learn from him what was the subject of our discourse?

*Swedenborg.* We will see. What was the name of your friend?

The merchant told him his name.

*Swedenborg.* How long do you remain here?

*Merchant.* About eight or ten days.

*Swedenborg.* Call upon me again in a few days. I will see if I can find your friend.

The merchant took his leave and dispatched his business. Some days afterwards, he went again to Swedenborg, full of expectation. The old gentleman met him with a smile, and said, "I have spoken with your friend; the subject of your discourse was *the restitution of all things*." He then related to the merchant, with the greatest precision, what he, and what his deceased friend had maintained. My friend turned pale; for this proof was powerful and invincible. He inquired further, "How fares it with my friend: Is he in a state of blessedness?" Swedenborg answers, "No, he is not yet in heaven; he is still in Hades, and torments himself continually with the idea of the restitution of all things." This answer caused my friend the greatest astonishment. He exclaimed, "My God! What, in the other world?" Swedenborg replied, "Certainly; a man takes with him his favourite inclinations and

opinions; and it is very difficult to be divested of them. We ought, therefore, to lay them aside here.” My friend took his leave of this remarkable man, perfectly convinced, and returned back to Elberfeld.

Docs II, 487–488

There is one more incident that almost lends a master touch to all the rest, but because it repeats the import already seen in these, I would like to pause to examine their implications. Though several incidents were viewed at the time to illustrate his spiritual powers, these seem to illustrate what is now called extrasensory perception (ESP). In three examples, Swedenborg is with company and suddenly sees what is going on at a distance. These are the Stockholm fire, the death of Peter III, and the start of the factory fire. These were all matters that touched on his life. The Stockholm fire was burning toward his property; the fire in the factory was about to wipe out a friend. It is not as clear that he was emotionally involved in the death of Peter. My guess is that he was. He was a nobleman who voted in the House of Lords. He was concerned with European wars and treaties as illustrated by his intimate knowledge of the negotiations between Sweden and Prussia. It appears that important information concerning present events could break in on his awareness. This is clairvoyance. Since these events are two centuries old, there could have been many more examples of the same phenomena that were not recorded.

Two incidents suggest that Swedenborg had precognition: his predictions of the death of Olof Olofsohn and his knowledge of the time that his sea voyage would end. In the Olofsohn case, he apparently sought the information and got it at will. The last incident to be reported also involves precognition.

Three events appear to involve searching out and communicating with someone who has died. These are the incident with the queen, finding the lost receipt, and contacting a friend for the merchant. Although the queen said that Swedenborg had reported what no living person knew, actually she knew, or she couldn't have affirmed it. Contacting the friend for the merchant was similar. Conceivably, Swedenborg could have read the queen's and the merchant's minds. The incident of the lost receipt is another matter, for there was no one around whose mind could be read. It had to have been a matter of postcognition (reading the past husband's mind, that no longer existed on earth) or directly contacting the husband who still existed in some other realm.

Apparently, this information was available at will; Swedenborg just needed a little time to seek it out. Also, not all information was spontaneously given to him. For instance, his sister had died and he did not know of it (Docs II, 559). When chided about this, he said, in effect, that he hadn't asked about her. Also, he was emotionally distant from her at the time. He could find out what he wanted of the past, present, or future, and present information would break in on his awareness if it concerned him. Here was a gift many want to have and many would try to use to their profit. What one could do with a few days foreknowledge of the stock market, for instance! Yet Swedenborg considered his gift of remarkably little importance.

Underlying this lies the more fundamental question of the relationship of ESP powers and this realm. There was little in Swedenborg's writings to suggest a connection between them. We usually think of ESP and being a spirit seer as separate phenomena, but I believe they arise from the same source; and if they are not identical, they are close enough that it should be no surprise that they arise together.

First, let us look at the matter from Swedenborg's viewpoint. He had angels from heaven and spirits from hell with him all the time. He said clearly that everyone does. His advantage was that he could see and talk with them. Also, he was so familiar with the spiritual worlds that he could distinguish between those from hell and those from heaven. Spirits from hell often claimed they could predict the future, but they really couldn't. This is true, too, when dealing with contemporary lower-order hallucinations. They like to pretend that they predict and even control the future, but this doesn't hold up under even a simple test.

The matter is quite the opposite in heaven. The Lord knows the whole of existence—past, present, or future. The Lord, heaven, and angels essentially transcend time. From this, it is possible for anyone in contact with angels to do all that Swedenborg did—read the past, present, or future or contact those who had died. What we see as foresight here is actually a part of divine providence:

From this it may be seen how far someone errs who believes that the Lord has not foreseen and does not see the smallest individual thing with man, or that within the smallest individual thing He does not foresee and lead, when in fact the Lord's foresight and providence are present within the tiniest details of all the smallest individual things with him, . . . governing him and diverting him so that he may be such, this being achieved by constant re-shaping of his freedom.

An analogy can be used to illustrate this time situation. A road winds a long way up a mountain. The driver on the road sees just the little stretch that involves him. Someone at the top of the mountain can look down on all the drivers and predict when and where one coming down would meet a driver coming up. Heaven, at the top of the mountain, looks down on our limited conception of time. Anyone in contact with heaven can get this kind of information. The real issue is not whether it happens, but under what circumstances and to what purpose. The circumstances refer back to the whole matter of the way Swedenborg entered this inner state and what he was inwardly. He indicated that his actual way of breathing had to change before he could perceive heaven. I think that the boundary between our wanting to know the future and the higher knowledge of the spiritual world is just about where Swedenborg placed it. These worlds were meant to be separate. Only for good purposes and only rarely could the knowledge of one show in the other.

Look again at the incidents. At the time of the Stockholm fire, Swedenborg was still resolved to conceal that he had this added knowledge. The whole experience of seeing and reporting the fire happened against his will. Its good effect was to thrust him out of hiding. Today, this is the incident most often associated with the mystic from Sweden. Once his gift had been revealed, Swedenborg used it mostly for the good of others—even though he still considered it very unimportant. The incidents with the queen, Olof Olofsohn, Peter III, the voyage, and the merchant's dead friend stimulated some to consider his works and a few to believe him. The incident of the receipt saved a good woman from financial distress. The incident of the factory fire saved a friend from financial ruin. Apparently many people asked Swedenborg to check up on deceased friends, but he refused, because the good served was not sufficient. In many places, Swedenborg describes the Lord or heaven as good itself. It is curious that heaven answers insofar as good is served.

While most of the incidents involve ESP, some involve apparent contact with a person's spirit. I think these are part of the same phenomena, contact with a realm whose time system transcends ours. Swedenborg casually mentions that angels lose the sense of what we on earth mean by time, for their time is inward, experienced as a change of state. What does daybreak

mean to an angel? Why, the dawning of understanding, of course! What else could it mean?

This last incident always seems somewhat humorous to me. Unlike many contemporary mystics, gurus, and occultists, Swedenborg didn't mean to show his powers. Yet, he again stumbled into doing so by accident. This incident is well attested to, since it involved John Wesley, the founder of Methodism.

The scene was a drawing room in England, February 1772. John Wesley was preparing for a religious speaking tour and the Reverend Samuel Smith and others were assisting him. The gathering was interrupted by the arrival of a letter that Wesley opened and read with evident astonishment.

Great Bath Street  
Coldbath Fields  
February 1772

Sir,

I have been informed in the world of spirits that you have a strong desire to converse with me; I shall be happy to see you if you will favour me with a visit.

I am, sir, your humble servant,

Emanuel Swedenborg

Docs II, 565

Wesley told these gentlemen that he did want to see Swedenborg, but he had told no one of it. He answered Swedenborg, saying that their meeting would have to take place in six months, after his travels. Swedenborg wrote back that he could not meet him at that time, for he was to die on the twenty-ninth of the next month, which, of course, he did (Docs II, 564–565). Wesley was at first quite impressed; but when his follower Reverend Smith studied and took up Swedenborg's teachings, Wesley joined with those who held the Swede mad.

At his death, Swedenborg was living with the barber Shearsmith and his family on Bath Street, London. At first, the family was a little frightened of this great man who appeared to go into trances and held conversations in strange tongues with invisible strangers, but he came to be known and liked. They said he often went out in an old-fashioned suit of black velvet with long ruffles, a curious hilted sword, and a gold-headed cane. He ate little meat, concentrating on cakes, tea, sweetened coffee, and water. He used a great deal of snuff and fortunately spilled enough on his manuscripts to help preserve them from insects.

Toward the end, he lay for some weeks in a trance without sustenance. Shortly before his death, he suffered a stroke and partial paralysis on one side of his body. Friends brought a Swedish minister named Ferelius to his bedside, to give him the last rites. The minister spoke:

I observed to him, that, as quite a number of people thought his sole purpose in promulgating his new theological system had been to make himself a name, or to acquire celebrity, which object, indeed he had thereby attained, if such had been the case, he ought now to do the world the justice to retract it either in whole or part, especially as he could not expect to derive any additional advantage from this world, which he would soon leave. He thereupon half rose in his bed, and laying his sound hand upon his breast said with some manifestation of zeal: “As true as you see me before your eyes, so true is everything that I have written; and I could have said more, had it been permitted. When you enter eternity, you will see everything, and then you and I shall have much to talk about.”

Docs II, 557–558

The minister didn’t seem to know Swedenborg well. The old man gave the minister one of the few unsold copies of the *Arcana Coelestia*. Since these twelve volumes are his most profound writings, it is unlikely the minister read much of them. Afterward, the Shearsmiths’ maid innocently commented that he had told them all of his death a few days before. She said he seemed pleased, “as if he was going to have a holiday, to go to some merry-making” (Docs II, 546), which may well have been the case. The man who knew what it was all about had no fear of dying.



## EXISTENCE ITSELF AS SYMBOLIC



THERE IS ANOTHER FUNDAMENTAL INDICATION that Swedenborg had indeed known higher worlds. His view of this world had completely turned around. Before 1745, he was very much embedded in the material world. In 1745, while exploring inward, he had difficulty understanding the strange symbolism and vagaries of inner processes. Yet within a few years, he stood solidly in the feelingful world of heaven, ruled by the One God. From this world, all the lesser material worlds of humanity, of things, of the earth, had become symbolic. All existence had become an indication of the work of the Lord. He found meanings everywhere that only a few had suspected. And with this new understanding came the most difficult to understand and incredible aspect of Swedenborg. The description of heaven and hell might be accepted, but how was humankind to understand and accept that we ourselves, and all existence, are really just representations of the One?

Swedenborg then saw everything in relation to the Divine. What was creating existence, making things every moment to be as it was, had come into the first place. What was first in creation was first in his understanding. Everything else fell into secondary places as correspondents. All levels of existence were symbolic representations of the nature of the Divine. He must have experienced something fundamentally different to have shifted to such an awesome view of creation. The implications of this shift will be

treated in a number of different ways so its sweeping implications will gradually become clearer.

All the orders of existence are steps down from the One which is the All. The One (called by a multitude of names in all times and cultures) is the Only and Self-subsistent. All other orders of existence are dependent both for their very nature and their continued existence. This stepping down into more and more limited orders of existence permits the One to be manifest on all possible levels, revealing its nature through all possible limitations:

Now because every single thing remains in being from the Divine, that is, is constantly coming into being from Him, and every single thing from that source is inevitably a representative of the real thing by means of which it has come into being, the whole visible universe is therefore nothing else than a theatre that is representative of the Lord's kingdom. And this in turn is a theatre representative of the Lord Himself.

*Arcana Coelestia* §3483

The first step down is the celestial heaven, which in its celestial love corresponds most closely to the One itself. The spiritual heaven is the next step down, a lesser representation, corresponding to celestial love, the love of one person for another (where "the joy of one is the joy of all"). The natural heaven is the lowest level of heaven. The world of spirits is the next level. Here spirits are opened to and discover their inner nature. And the world of spirits interacts with the inner processes of mind. The human mind itself is a series of levels corresponding to all levels of the spiritual world, ranging from almost pure feelings to thoughts and ideas, to speech and gestures, to the body itself. Beyond humankind, animals, plants, and the physical world are further lower-order correspondents to the One. This whole series of existences corresponds to the One God who is thereby everywhere manifest. Not only humanity is made in the image, but creation itself is a series of images.

We can break into this series at any point and try to understand the nature of what is being represented. We can look at events in the world of spirits and see echoed there the general nature of heaven. Or we can look at a woman's face and gestures and try to see what is being represented of her nature. Or we can look at animals and nature and try to see what is being represented of humankind's nature. This seems like an odd thing to do, but many of the occult sciences delve into precisely this kind of relationship. Any aspect of nature can be looked at as representing the human being, or the inner of the human looked at as a representation of the spiritual world,

or levels of heaven can be looked at to better understand God. God is not simply boss of the whole of existence. Of much more importance, the One is the most fundamental tendency, drift, or nature of existence. By seeing everything as symbolic or as correspondent, Swedenborg was looking at this drift of the real nature of things. Whether one believes it or not, cares or not, the drift is there anyway. We see the source out of which things come and how they reflect that source. The end they serve reflects that source. It is very much as though Swedenborg came to see the real ends of existence. When asked why there is humankind at all, Swedenborg answered, that there may be a heaven. Human life on earth is a seminary (seed bed, related to semen) for heaven.

This stepping down, imaging of existence, Swedenborg treated under the ideas of correspondence and representation. A priest, minister, or rabbi represents the holy of the Divine by his vestments and the services he conducts. This is true even if the representative is evil. Swedenborg even says that because the priest, minister, or rabbi represents this, the office and ceremony are to be respected even in the hands of an evil person. Where the representation is a good fit to what it represents, then it may be said to correspond. All existence *represents* God, but unless a thing has goodness in it, it doesn't *correspond* to God. A correspondent is then inwardly suitable. Correspondence is an organic relationship, just as an effect corresponds to its cause. Symbols are a more limited idea than what Swedenborg dealt with. A symbol is often an image of something greater than itself. Swedenborg dealt with existence itself, which is a larger idea than an image. All but God himself are representations or images:

Representations are nothing else than images of spiritual things manifested in natural ones, and when the former are accurately represented in the latter they correspond. But anyone who does not know what the spiritual dimension is but only what the natural is may imagine that such representations and consequent correspondences are not possible. For he might say to himself, How can that which is spiritual act on that which is material? But if he will reflect on the things taking place every moment within himself he will be able to gain some concept of them—that is to say, if he will reflect on how the will can act on the muscles of the body and produce actual movements; on how thought can act on the organs of speech . . . ; also on how affections can act on the face and there produce images of themselves. . . . These actions are able to provide some idea of representations and correspondences. Now as such things are produced in man and not one continues to be produced there by itself but is effected by something else, and this is effected by something else again, which finally is effected by the First—all of which is achieved by means of a connected series of correspondences—those who enjoy some fair measure of judgement may

deduce that there is a correspondence between the human being and heaven, and in addition between heaven and the Lord, who is the First.

*Arcana Coelestia* §4044

Our own functioning is one of the most concrete and immediate examples of correspondence. Our lives are a bridge between the spiritual within and the material without. Our movements, gestures, speech, etc., correspond to the inner life. Inwardly, we participate in a spiritual world, while, outwardly, in our bodies, we are in the world of things:

The whole natural world is responsive to the spiritual world—the natural world not just in general, but in detail. So whatever arises in the natural world out of the spiritual one is called a “something that corresponds.” It needs to be realized that the natural world arises from and is sustained in being by the spiritual world, exactly the way an effect relates to its efficient cause.

By “the natural world,” I mean all that extended reality that is under our sun. . . . The spiritual world, in contrast, is heaven, and to that world belong all the things that are in the heavens.

Since a human being is a heaven *and* a world in least form in the image of the greatest . . . , there is a spiritual world and a natural world within each of us. The deeper elements, which belong to our minds and relate to our intelligence and volition, constitute our spiritual world, while the outer elements, which belong to our bodies and relate to our senses and actions, constitute our natural world. Anything that occurs in our natural world (that is, in our bodies and their senses and actions) because of our spiritual world (that is, because of our minds and their intelligence and volition) is called something that corresponds.

*Heaven and Hell* §§89–90

## Parallels to Correspondence

At first, Swedenborg’s idea of correspondence may seem to be just an odd notion that creates a lot of symbolic understandings. But it so pervades his writings that, unless its sweep and importance is understood, his writings seem odd. What does it mean that a particular group of people are located in heaven under the foot of the Grand Man? Why, it means they are particularly materialistic in their orientation. And the Grand Man? It’s the full nature of humanness in heaven, *of which we are images*.

Swedenborg’s idea of correspondences is the most general statement of an idea that has repeatedly turned up in the world’s literature. It is both an ancient and modern idea, with so many parallels that it is not possible even to catalog them all.

Swedenborg often referred to correspondence as an ancient science that was later mostly lost:

I showed in my book *Heaven and Hell* (87–105), that every single thing to be found in nature corresponds to something spiritual, and likewise every single part of the human body. But up to the present it has remained unknown what correspondence is. Yet in the most ancient times it was very well known; for those who lived at that period regarded the knowledge of correspondences as the outstanding science, and it was so universally known that all their documents and books were written by means of correspondences. The book of Job, which is a book of the Ancient Church, is full of correspondences. The hieroglyphic writings of the Egyptians, as well as the myths of the most ancient peoples, were nothing else. All the ancient churches served to represent spiritual ideas; their rites and the rules which governed the establishment of their modes of worship were made up of nothing but correspondences. The same is true of all the details of the church among the Children of Israel. Their burnt offerings, sacrifices, sacrificial cakes and libations in all their particulars had meaning as correspondences; likewise the tabernacle . . . , their festivals . . . , and also the priesthood of Aaron and the Levites, together with their holy vestments.

*True Christian Religion* §201

I have been taught that the people of the Most Ancient church, which existed before the flood, had such heavenly characters that they conversed with angels in heaven. They were able to do this by correspondences. So they reached such a pitch of wisdom that they not only thought naturally about anything they saw on earth, but at the same time also thought spiritually about it, and this established their link with angels in heaven. I was also taught that Enoch, who is mentioned in Genesis 5:21–24, together with his colleagues collected these correspondences by listening to their talk, and transmitted this science to posterity. As a result the science of correspondences was not merely known but held in high esteem in many Asiatic kingdoms, especially in the land of Canaan, Egypt, Assyria, Chaldaea, Syria, Arabia, Tyre, Sidon and Nineveh. From there it was transmitted to Greece, but was transformed into myths, as is evident in the earliest Greek authors.

*True Christian Religion* §202

The ancient people who possessed the science of correspondences made themselves images to correspond to heavenly ideas; and they took pleasure in them because they stood for such things as concern heaven and the church. They placed these images therefore not only in their temples, but also in their houses, not so as to worship them, but to call to mind the heavenly ideas they stood for. Hence it was that in Egypt and elsewhere they used images of calves, oxen and snakes, not to mention children, old men and young women. . . . Once the knowledge of correspondences had been wiped out, their descendants started to worship as holy, and finally as deities, the images and statues their ancestors had erected, because they were in or near temples. This too was the reason why the ancients worshipped in gardens and plantations, depending on the species of tree, as well as on mountains and hills.

*True Christian Religion* §205

It would be possible to cull from Swedenborg's works a great deal of ancient, lost knowledge that he learned by conversing with these people in

heaven. The result would give richness to ancient images and ceremonies that we are inclined to see as simple and primitive.

We have mostly lost the sense of this ancient language. Primitive peoples who sat before a fire at night could read in the flames guidance as to how they should live. The flames corresponded to their will and understanding. With our present sophistication, we would say they were merely projecting their ideas into the forms of the flames. Swedenborg would not entirely disagree with this. Insofar as they projected from the deepest levels of themselves, they would be letting the spiritual world within show in the forms of the flames. This primitive animism still exists. In various parts of the world, primitive peoples consult trees, streams, rocks, and the sky, and they learn from and are guided by them. Swedenborg clearly compliments these peoples, for they were in easy communication with the spiritual world. Swedenborg's *Arcana Coelestia* and *Apocalypse Explained* say much about how subsequent generations lost this original language of correspondence. The living, delicate experience of Jesus, about to die, breaking bread with friends, becomes frozen into neat little wafers. Worse yet, much of the inner life and meaning goes out of ceremonies. Swedenborg dealt at length with the meanings in the Hebrew tabernacle, meanings that very few practicing Jews even suspect (*Arcana Coelestia* §9455–9456). Ceremony is a partly alive, mostly dead, a leftover of the primal experience of a correspondence between spiritual meaning and things in the world.

There are many other former uses of correspondence. Ancient peoples gradually worked out a relationship of the configuration of planets at birth and thereafter to an individual's personality and contemporary problems. Astrology is an example of correspondence between the inner person and planetary configurations. Although to many it seems a specious science (as is true of all claimed correspondences), at least Carl Jung felt it had real merit.<sup>1</sup> The ancients had a whole host of ways of trying to divine the future and find guidance by the arrangement of material things, the fall of cards (Tarot), tea leaves, yarrow sticks (*I Ching*), cracked bones (scalpulamancy), etc. Usually these systems required a considerable amount of interpretation that allowed some projection of inner processes; they didn't give simple yes or no answers. Although at first this seems like a weakness, it is probably critical to the effective functioning of these systems. If you consult the *I Ching* or the Tarot asking a simple "shall I or shan't I?" you are likely to get

so rich an answer that it requires your thinking deeper on the question and your purposes. Like the tremulous rapid movement of the flame, there is room for the inner depths to be projected. Jung felt there was actual synchronicity. The person who sincerely asked a question of the fall of yarrow sticks (cards, coins, tea leaves, etc.) found he or she fell into a pattern that was an image or correspondent of deep inner processes. It may well be a matter that believers find something true and nonbelievers find it false because each one finds what reflects him or her.

Magic, in its deeper, older sense, is another example of correspondence. We think of magic mostly as the tricky sleight of hand of a showman. In its ancient sense, the correspondence between the inner and outer was used to control the inner. For instance, if one believed that to stand in a ritualistically laid rope circle protected one from spiritual harm, it probably did. The outer rope circle, ceremoniously laid, corresponded symbolically to spiritual protection. This kind of magic, including brewing every possible concoction (such as lizards' tails, gathered in the full of the moon!) and every kind of ceremony, was put to both good and evil uses. In voodoo practices, we see contemporary examples of this. Believers make a statue of an enemy and put a pin in it to wound him or her. The statue and the pin wound correspond to the enemy and what one wants to happen to that person. Although I don't believe Swedenborg commented directly on this use of correspondence, it appears his writing would not support its effectiveness. He always saw the real ruling force as inner; the outer only reflected it. Hence, if you believed the rope circle really worked, if it reflected your inner, it would be effective. But the voodoo doll could not hurt *me*, unless *I* really believed in its effectiveness. We have to say that this whole realm of correspondential magic is foolish or real, depending on your felt beliefs.

Swedenborg did comment that there were whole languages, such as the ancient Egyptian, that were based on spiritual correspondences. I believe all these languages began with pictures of animals and objects that were broadly symbolic and quite meaningful when coined. Or languages began by the correspondence between feeling and sound. Later generations only penetrated the outer shell of these languages, having lost the spirit of awe that went into their creation.

Ancient myth and religion were often heady brews of correspondences to humankind's innermost experiences. Greek mythology is a good example

(*Arcana Coelestia* §2762). In later generations, we again have lost the tremulous spirit that coined these myths, and what is left is just a collection of quaint stories.

Another example of correspondences is in ancient alchemy. When people knew little of chemicals and the magic of their chemistry, they could get very involved in the processes. Again, Jung penetrated the strange business of alchemy to find medieval man attempting to reach spiritual integration (the philosopher's gold) in the midst of his strange brews. Jung did a most careful and well-illustrated description of this process. The chemical and inner processes corresponded. These deeply involved chemists were working at themselves in their retorts. It wasn't just a simple matter of putting things together in the right order. A woman, sex, religious symbols, meditation, great soul-searching, and doubt were all involved. We now know too much to get so involved in chemistry. Or one could say that we are too distant to get so involved.

Most of the examples of the use of correspondence come from ancient times. In many ways, we are less capable of participating in this strange bridging of the inner and outer, yet we can give modern examples of essentially the same process. The projective tests used by psychologists are a good example. Give a client some vague material and encourage him to shape the situation to suit him. He may be asked to tell what he sees in inkblots (Rorschach test), to draw a person (Machover test) or a tree, or to select a dramatic backdrop and cardboard figures and make a drama (MAPS test), or simply to copy geometric figures (Bender-Gestalt test).<sup>2</sup> Through long observation and study, psychologists can read the personality traits of their clients from these creations. The client projects both what is conscious and unconscious. What he sees, how he reacts, or how he draws a simple line reflects his real personality. The way a person sees an inkblot corresponds to what he is. There isn't any particular magic in the test materials. To create a really simple test, I once had people just make a dot on a page, but I abandoned it after distinguishing the brain-damaged, compulsive, neurotic, hostile, etc.

Another example of correspondence is in psychosomatic medicine. Some very real physical disorders are also representations of psychic conflict. The duodenal ulcer, for instance, often occurs in a person who denies dependency and fights for self-sufficiency. But the poor stomach tells an opposite story. It says, "Feed me. Take care of me." The stomach



represents the unconscious need for dependency. Although migraine is partly hereditary and partly metabolic, it also represents a psychic situation. Very often the migraine sufferer is conscientious, self-driven, compulsive. The headache explodes and says, “Forget it all. You’ve forgotten yourself. Stop, rest, and take care of yourself.” Psychosomatic medicine is still a young branch of medicine, and it is not yet known if all disorders have this psychic component.<sup>3</sup>

This spontaneous natural language of the body was outlined by Swedenborg two centuries ago. It is not fair to say simply that Swedenborg founded psychosomatic medicine. What he was doing with the correspondences of the body and contemporary psychosomatic medicine are quite different. This medicine unwraps what diseased and distressed organs say psychologically; Swedenborg was dealing with normal organs. Yet there is a similarity. Swedenborg stressed that the heart and vascular system correspond to love. Psychosomatic disorders of the heart often have to do with strong feelings; thus, he was not far off.<sup>4</sup>

Everyone’s mind has a natural capacity to speak in the language of correspondences. This is probably why an understanding of this language has appeared in many different cultures at different times. Dreams are natural spontaneous phenomena showing the language of correspondence. Everyone dreams several times a night. There is good experimental evidence, now, that dreaming is a necessary process.<sup>5</sup> In dreams, the inner potential of the individual images forth the situation of the dreamer. The dream uses imagery to dramatically represent the dreamer’s situation. The correspondential language of dreams transcends our ordinary understanding, so we must learn to read this spontaneous internal language.

Closer to consciousness, there are many ways of meditating or allowing fantasy expression that again are natural examples of the language of symbolic representations. For instance, I have often taught people to relax and gaze at anything in the room that catches their eye—patterns in the rug, cracks in the floor, a bit of crumpled paper, anything. With relaxed observation, what is looked at soon begins to suggest meanings. I recall one alcoholic woman who studied a crack in the floor. She tearfully saw in it the varied ups and downs of her life. We can at any time discover this inner representation of ourselves. We tend to represent ourselves even when we don’t want to, when we form opinions of situations. The meanings we project into or find in situations very much reflect ourselves. The primitive

human studying the flames of a campfire and our projecting meaning into situations are really the same process except the primal being is a little more advanced. His is a more delicate and sensitive searching for meaning, while our opinions are a more abrupt categorizing of things.

In *The Natural Depth in Man*, I describe a graduated series of inner states. The general tenor of these states, as we wander down the corridor of mind, is toward symbolization or representation. Whatever we are has a profound inner drift toward representing its real nature. Self-reflection, fantasy, visions, hallucinations, dreams—all are various levels of this single central tendency. I personally am convinced that this capacity to represent our real selves is the most primal and fundamental tendency in the human being. Even lowering the person slowly toward physical death via anesthesia, as my own experience has shown, greatly intensifies this process. This process exists in everyone, whether the individual believes it or not, cares or not, is educated or religious or not. It is a primal root tendency in humanness and could well exist in the rest of the animal kingdom, since animals also seem to dream.

Rather than try to prove this tendency here (as I did in *The Natural Depth in Man*), it is more important to inquire why. What is the implication of this universal inborn disposition toward representing our inner selves? In my earlier work, I systematically tried to nail down what we could infer of the source of this tendency. One main implication is that our minds or lives are designed with a kind of self-corrective, more brilliant-than-us, internal guidance system. The main difficulty with this innate drift of wisdom is that its mode of thinking and understanding is higher than ours. Hence, it reveals itself in a language of symbols that transcends our understanding. We have to learn to come up to it, to understand its wisdom. The main purpose of this internal system is that it sees, reflects, and comments on the quality of our life. It is apparently concerned with the inner nature and quality of each one's existence. It appears to operate from a plane in which all things are seen as related, from omniscience. This omniscient aspect is what causes it to be naturally and profoundly symbolic. The symbol arises in a sphere in which the nature of a thing is profoundly understood and seen in its relationship to everything else. Hence, in going within, Swedenborg worked through a forest of symbolism to arrive at the source of this process, the Divine itself.

Swedenborg says that the science of correspondences is the primary science of the ancients. With this brief sketch of just a few of the areas it involves, we can still agree it is a primary field of knowledge. Under the general heading of correspondences, Swedenborg dealt with the basic understanding involved in animism, divination, the formation of language, religious ceremony, astrology, magic, myth, alchemy, projective tests, psychosomatic medicine, dream interpretation, interpreting fantasy, visions and hallucinations, and the like. Yet, to Swedenborg, these were relatively minor uses of correspondence. As we shall see later, he felt the greatest use was in unlocking the secrets of heaven hidden within the Bible.

## **The Language of Correspondence**

There are several ways of learning the language of correspondence. Swedenborg began with the simplest one—the one that anyone can use—when he started working out the symbols that appeared in his dreams and hypnogogic experiences. The real advantage of the hypnogogic process is that one can experience a particular state and discover immediately how it is symbolized by the hypnogogic.

Another way to learn of it is direct revelation from heaven. After he was elevated to heaven, Swedenborg read the Bible and found inner meanings opened to him.

There is a kind of sense to the language of correspondences or symbols. The inner uses real events of the world, showing great regard for the way the person experiences things. The earth has the implications for most people of solid, safe, real, material in contrast to what is high, airy, less certain. Each symbol can be taken negatively or positively. Earth can mean safe or solid. In the opposite sense, it can mean earthbound or limited. Each of these meanings is in relation to the person's experience, and as such they correspond to aspects of the person. We speak of a person as earthy. Again it can be taken two ways: as down to earth, in contrast to airy or flighty; or as limited, as though a clod (of earth).

Take the concept of "hand." How do we experience our hands? As we reach out and do something, our power comes into use. Hand signifies power. A handmaiden, in archaic usage, was an assistant. A handyman has a general ability to do things. Swedenborg says the hand signifies power, the hand and arm greater power, and the shoulder, all power (*Arcana*

*Coelestia* §1085). A man who lent us his hands, arms, and shoulders would be pretty much doing his utmost for us.

My point is that the language of correspondence or symbols is intimately linked to the way people experience things. There are further clues in the slang use of words, such as “lend a hand,” “bear a hand,” “hands down” (they can’t carry anything in that position), “handy,” and so forth. Where we have considerable experience of a thing, it is easier to recover these ancient meanings. Sight has to do with understanding, as in the expression “Oh, I see.” Hearing has to do with being receptive, as in “Listen to me,” or make yourself receptive to me.

There are also many symbols whose inner quality of meaning has been lost. For instance, bones have to do with the central nature of a person. The bone structure or innermost nature allows a person to stand up or reveal himself—hence the old expression “he is bone of my bone,” that is, fundamentally like me. The kidney separates the unwanted waste material from the blood. The inner meaning is just that: what separates the unwanted from the wanted. The heart and blood vessel system is the warm, red life within the person. There are many literary references to spilling of blood, meaning that life is escaping and being lost. The heart has a long association with life and love. The blood system is the inner, affective, feeling life of the individual. The lungs relate to both the inside and outside; they take in air from the outside and nourish the blood. What bridges the world outside and the life within is the understanding. Thus, the lungs and the whole respiratory system represent the understanding. Swedenborg says that in the spiritual world a person’s faith or reception of truth may be perceived by the respiration of his lungs and the quality of his charity by the pulsation of his heart (*Divine Providence* §19). Here the symbolism is a little beyond what we can recognize easily. With a little loosening up of feeling and associations, we can begin to read this language of correspondences. It is very like poetry, like moving into a new sphere of thought, because it opens up the interior of human experience and puts one at the threshold of spiritual thought.

We can begin to see how aspects of our own body represent aspects of our inner spiritual life. Sight is like seeing, that is, understanding. Hearing is like making one’s self receptive. But how can the outer world also be images of the human being and ultimately of the spiritual world and God’s nature? The Chinese see bamboo as like a gentleman. Look at the way it

grows. It stands straight; it does not intrude on its neighbor. Here is an analogy. Swedenborg was speaking even more basically. In heaven, the animals, plants, landscape literally represent the nature of the people there. Those in hell feel they are in pretty places, but seen in the light of heaven or truth their places look like small, dark, mean holes. Those who are spiritually rich find themselves in magnificent palaces with great gardens. In a subtle way, this is true of us, too. The world we perceive reflects us. The holy man sees holy, sacred things; the businessman sees goods of however much value.

An example using animals shows how Swedenborg saw existence as corresponding to the human being. We take animals to be real creatures occupying this world in ways similar to us. Animals really exist, of course; yet they also represent the possibilities of human feeling. For instance, the domestic cat has a clear affective disposition. It is soft, quiet, oriented to its own comfort. It is like a particular kind of sensual pleasure. It is loyal as long as it is satisfied. Unsatisfied, it is likely to show its discontent and make demands to be fed or attended to. It represents this set of affective possibilities. Each individual cat differs to a degree, but these are its norms. It is like a theme and variation in music: the basic disposition of the domestic cat is the theme, and individual cats are the variation. Cats exist in heaven. There they represent the affective orientation described above. Almost any observer of domestic cats will recognize this sensuous orientation. We sense it because we feel it in ourselves and empathize with it. This does not deny that there are real cats in the real world out there. This view goes beyond that, asking almost why there are any cats at all. Beyond the real cat are the affective tendencies we can recognize, because it is like an aspect of ourselves; it goes beyond the human to the possibilities in existence. Since, in heaven, there are no material things, cats there even more clearly represent an aspect of the inner life of angels that in turn reflects an aspect of the inner life of God. When Swedenborg spoke of representations or correspondents, he was not in the least denying or overlooking the real, material world. He was looking *through* it to the whole of creation. That is how fundamental a shift the whole business of correspondence, or symbolic language, is.

Even if we aren't interested in how things are represented in the spiritual world, it still helps to see animals as corresponding to affections. The one who can feel in himself the disposition represented by a cat can deal with

cats in an empathetic way, can please them. The gentle touch around the head makes the cat feel more comfortable and at home. The one who can understand the interactive parallels of cats and owners can appreciate the owner better through the cat. But if one wants to understand more than this, then seeing animals as particular kinds of affections leads to a sympathetic understanding of the possibilities in existence, all existences.

In a way, Swedenborg's way of looking through the material world to the worlds beyond seems almost selfishly human-centered, as though we are the biggest, best, and only thing around. In effect, if we ranked the orders of existence in Swedenborg's terms, the world (including our own body) is one order; our inner experience is the next greatest world; the spiritual worlds beyond this one, the next greatest; and God's nature, supreme. *Our existence, our experience, is the door to all else.* That is simply the way it is. This doesn't give us cosmic status so much as it gives us cosmic responsibility. But in the hierarchical order of things, our existence here is near the bottom. How we are the door to all else (made in the image of God) has been miserably, poorly understood. In a real sense, Swedenborg threw too much light on this. The light was dazzling, blinding, and not well understood. Our experience is the bridge between the material world, in which our body really lives, and the worlds between this and the Divine. Swedenborg was human-centered, but this partly meant responsibility to ourselves and creation, responsibility insofar as we understand it.

This awakening feeling of responsibility for creation is reflected in the concern with conservation of animal species. Progress was about to drain and cement over a pond that housed a rare species of salamander that existed nowhere else on earth. Concerned people saved this pond. The demise of this salamander could have cut the possibilities in creation by one. We are awakening from the feeling that we can take and use whatever part of existence we want, to a more responsible position as custodian.

## **The Grand Man**

Swedenborg revealed that all the multitudes of heaven are organized into societies that are parts of the Grand Man. The whole of heaven is in the form of a man (*Arcana Coelestia* §§3624–3635). At first, this sounds like a strange and overly anthropomorphic, or human-centered, idea. It has to be examined a little to see how beautiful a conception it is. *We are images of*

*the Grand Man*; the Grand Man is not an image of us. The Grand Man is all aspects of the humanness of God combined. The hierarchical order is then God, the Divine Human appearing as the Grand Man, our inner humanness, our bodily form. Each person is an edition or image of the Grand Man. Occasionally, Swedenborg would get very mystical and say something like “the Lord is the essential Person” (*Divine Providence* §65). There are many meanings here. Whatever a human being is at his or her core is God. Or, the other way around, God is a being like us, but *the essential Person*—that is, even more essentially what we tend to be:

Let me now tell of and describe marvels which, so far as I know, have not as yet been known to anyone, nor has even the idea of them entered anyone’s head—the marvel that the whole of heaven has been formed in such a way that it corresponds to the Lord, to His Divine Human; also the marvel that the human being has been formed in such a way that every single part of him corresponds to heaven, and through heaven to the Lord. This is a great mystery which is now to be revealed.

*Arcana Coelestia* §3624

Heaven corresponds to the Divine Human. The human being, in his or her mind and body, corresponds in the tiniest particulars to this form. We are an image of the Grand Man. The details of the societies that relate to the eyes, hands, feet, etc., of the Grand Man are the full inner implications of these parts of ourselves. Apparently, this is common knowledge in heaven:

It explains why several times, in what has gone before, heaven and angelic communities have been referred to as belonging to some province of the body, such as that of the head, or of the breast, or of the abdomen, or of some organ or limb there. And the reason they are referred to in this way lies with the above-mentioned correspondence.

The existence of such correspondence is very well known in the next life not only to angels but also to spirits, even to evil ones. From it angels know the deepest secrets in man, and the deepest secrets in the world and in the whole natural order there. This has often been made clear to me from the fact that when I have spoken about some part of the human being they know not only how the whole of that part is structured, the way in which it functions, and the purpose it serves, but also countless other details about it, more than man is ever capable of discovering or indeed understanding.

*Arcana Coelestia* §§3625–3626

[T]he whole of a person in general, and whatever exists in him in particular, corresponds, so much so that neither the smallest part, nor even the smallest fraction of a part, fails to correspond. Such experience has also taught me that it is from this correspondence that man comes into being, and is constantly kept in being; and also that but for such correspondence of the human being with heaven, and through heaven with the Lord . . . he would not continue in being for one instant but would dissolve into nothingness.

*Arcana Coelestia* §3628

Our existence both in general and in particular is a correspondent with heaven, and through the Grand Man of heaven, to the Lord. The Grand Man is the Lord's humanness. And it is made up of the countless multitudes of heaven organized into their innumerable societies of like-minded people. Each society is also in the form of a human being because this form represents a basic combination of functions. The idea staggers the imagination. It turns around all priorities. We are because It is. We are a corresponding image to It. It is the model of our existence, the ultimate of all our possibilities.

In hell, there is no Grand Man. The individuals there are cut off from each other and their potentials. They cannot unify into societies "where the joy of one is the joy of all." Hell is dark and fragmented. Heaven is the One.

The kernel of the whole idea of correspondences is that Something is manifesting and showing itself in many ways. This is true whether we speak of the Lord, the Grand Man as the basis of all humanity, or the way in which individuals endlessly cast forth images of themselves.

Swedenborg brought it all together in a few lines. Here he was speaking of all levels of existence simultaneously. At its lowest level, he was referring to the experience we each have of ourselves as the center of things:

[A]ll in the spiritual world consequently look like men and women. What is more, the whole of heaven is such that every one is so to speak the focal point of all, for he is the focal point of influxes coming through the heavenly form from all. Consequently the image of heaven is reproduced in everyone, making him a likeness of heaven and so a human being; for the character of the general whole determines that of any part of the general whole, since the parts must be like their general whole if they are to belong to it.

*Arcana Coelestia* §3633

The person with whom correspondence exists, that is to say, with whom love to the Lord and charity towards the neighbour, and consequently faith, exist, is as to his spirit in heaven and as to his body in the world. . . . [H]e is also an image of heaven. . . .

*Arcana Coelestia* §3634

[T]he whole visible universe is . . . nothing else than a theatre that is representative of the Lord's kingdom. And this in turn is a theatre representative of the Lord Himself.

*Arcana Coelestia* §3483



## INNER MEANINGS



EMANUEL SWEDENBORG HAD CLIMBED A LONG WAY UP from the valley floor of our ordinary experience and understanding. He began with rocks and minerals and climbed through all the sciences to the heights of the inner life and from there wandered through all the spiritual worlds. His psychological understanding of the spontaneous inner language of dreams and the hypnogogic state was already notable. Yet his work on the inner meanings contained in the Bible left almost everyone behind as he climbed through the clouds to the top of the mountain. This was his greatest, richest, and most difficult work to follow. I cannot summarize what he found here because it is too extensive. Instead, I would simply like to provide a general understanding of what was involved.

It is clear that this Swedish master felt that his unfolding of the spiritual and celestial meanings hidden in the language of the Bible was his greatest work. But as the theologian Horton points out, great men are not always remembered for what they considered great.<sup>1</sup> Sir Isaac Newton spent much time in alchemy, which is now forgotten alongside his work on celestial mechanics. In this case, however, those who know Swedenborg best would be inclined to agree that his work on the inner meanings of the Bible is his richest and most significant work.

Swedenborg came to theology by an unusual avenue, and this made all the difference. He took up theology while grappling with the spontaneous inner language of correspondences in dreams, in the hypnogogic state, and in trances. How many theologians enter theology in this manner? Hindu and Buddhist theologians may often enter this way, but not Western religious figures. Swedenborg's unusual understanding set him apart. To appreciate the greatness of his biblical work, one needs some appreciation and acceptance of the spontaneous inner language of symbolism. Knowledge of the language of the unconscious and an interest in biblical meaning seldom exist in one person; those interested in depth psychology are usually not interested in the Bible, and biblical scholars find the language of the unconscious merely a curiosity.

Swedenborg's former real ignorance of biblical meaning was striking in comparison to what he later found. In 1745, Swedenborg was working on *The Word Explained*, an eight-volume work that he wisely chose not to publish. There he tried to penetrate the meaning of the Bible with his own intellect. The work is a relatively dull rehash of conventional ideas. But here and there it has curious references to dreams, spirits, and correspondences. After his enlightenment by the Lord, his first publication was the *Arcana Coelestia* (*Heavenly Secrets*). The *Arcana* is so rich, deep, and powerful that it hardly looks like the work of the same man who had written *The Word Explained*. Something had happened. His whole understanding had richly flowered in several different directions simultaneously.

Swedenborg could not have been terribly concerned about his public relations image or the *Arcana* would not have been the first published work of this newly enlightened man. The English edition of the first tome of his new understanding runs to twelve volumes and 5,800 pages. These heavenly secrets are staggeringly rich. Even Swedenborg experts often put off reading it and treat it as a literary Mount Everest. On the surface, it is mainly an exposition of the inner meanings in Genesis and Exodus. But he also developed parallel meanings from almost every other part of the Bible, so he is coincidentally unlocking the whole of Scripture. It also goes into the dynamics of the inner life of individuals, churches, and Jesus Christ—simultaneously, since these are ultimately one. In addition, he intersperses cogent summaries of his findings in heaven and hell. Every other major idea he was to deal with for the next thirty years is contained in the *Arcana*.

Swedenborg published the *Arcana Coelestia* anonymously, as “Servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.” He sent copies to the learned bishops of the western world. No wonder they didn’t take notice! It was simply too rich and too different to be readily understood. Interestingly enough, ordinary people were first impressed by the *Arcana*. This is understandable, for it relates to the kind of meaning Swedenborg was dealing with.

In Swedenborg’s time, the Holy Bible was the Word of God. Other holy books, such as the Koran, Bhagavad Gita, Tao Te Ching, and Dhammapada, were little known and unavailable. Of all the world’s bibles, the western Holy Bible is probably by far the most obscure and varied work. There are many indications that it is at least partly a symbolic work. The Lord spoke in a symbolic language of parables, and, indeed, it was predicted the messiah would do this. The massive symbolism of the Book of Revelation had puzzled generations; there is clear symbolism everywhere in it. Isaiah refers to a man as a clay pot that complains of having handles (Isaiah 45:9–13). But how much is symbolic, and of what? Some early biblical scholars treated much of it as an allegory. Allegorical interpretation allowed anyone to find whatever meaning pleased him or her. Because of these excesses, allegorical interpretation fell into disfavor, and the opposite pole emerged. The fundamentalists stuck by the literal word as fact: thus, the world was “literally” created in six days.

Swedenborg’s approach to the Bible left room for these differences while transcending them. He was sure that there was a full and useful meaning in the literal words as read by the fundamentalists. In fact, this was the real basis of all the meanings. He said the internal meaning without the external would be like a house without a foundation (*Heavenly Doctrine* §262). For those who could not see any further beyond the literal, this meaning was meant to be a sufficient guide.

The key to the deeper meaning lay not so much in the psychological language of correspondences, which only gave one confidence in symbolic language, but in the spirit with which the person came to the Bible. Those who wanted just laws to guide their lives would find laws. Those who wanted to feel the presence of the Lord would find this presence. Those who struggled with understanding the complexities of human experience would find this echoed. Many people still read the Bible this way. When in trouble and searching for guidance, they look in the Bible, confident that it will speak to them as a personal friend and guide. And it does. On the other

hand, scholars who are stuffed with facts that a particular book was proven by computer analysis to be made of two separate documents would often find their personal experience of the Bible to founder in this scholarship. Swedenborg approached the Bible through that psychological experience by which it became alive to ordinary persons. Hence, where learned bishops couldn't see any gift in his work, ordinary people could. But whereas ordinary people sometimes projected into it and found meanings appropriate to them, Swedenborg found two universal levels of meanings locked within the odd language of the Bible. This does not contravene what ordinary people feel in the Bible, for I believe what they feel and what he is talking about are aspects of the same process. But where they are searching, Swedenborg was moving with great certainty and scholarship, under the guidance of heaven.

Swedenborg said that only the Lord inwardly instructs on the meaning of the Word. He clearly said that he was not instructed by any spirit or angel on what the Word meant; he was instructed only by the Lord. But this is true of everyone. The secret of unlocking the Bible lies in the spirit with which it is approached. Those who love truth for its own sake (not to show off their knowledge) and apply it in their lives will be shown. Being ready to apply it and use it was for Swedenborg a critical sign that the individual really wanted to know. Belief became real as act, not just an airy intellectual process.

Swedenborg used the term *Word* in more senses than just the printed Bible. He also used it in the deeper Hebrew sense of what causes all things to be (*White Horse* §17).<sup>2</sup> This is the Word that existed before anything was (John 1:1). One might say that the Word is the power of the Lord to form and guide. Those who approach the Bible with this deeper longing or searching will meet in it the power of God to guide them. Knock and it will be opened. The proof of understanding is in what the person does. What is real must exist. The Word of God becomes action or a use. So Swedenborg was really dealing with this heartbeat of understanding. As a result, those who engaged in a heartfelt search in the Bible were instructed by the Lord himself, who was their life. Whether this understanding was cloudy and fumbling in personal meaning or striking the real gold of the Lord's inner meaning, they were moving in the same direction. These heartfelt personal attempts could feel the power of the inner levels of meaning Swedenborg was referring to.

Swedenborg read the Bible in its original languages. The indexes of the day didn't satisfy him, so he made his own. He spent years on it. In fact, through most of his late years, the Bible was reported to be the only book visible in his study. He combined tremendous singleminded scholarship with experience of the Lord in heaven to produce one of the most profound understandings of the Bible ever offered. Indeed, its very richness, breadth, and depth impede anything but a wholehearted attempt to follow his lead. Many who gave his work a cursory glance dismissed it as allegorical (which it is not) or as denying the sense of the letter (which he held sacred).

Swedenborg found that most of the Bible contained, within the outer sense of the letter, two further levels of meaning. The significant books in the Old Testament are the five books of Moses, Joshua, Judges, the two books of Samuel, the two Kings, the Psalms of David and the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. In the New Testament books with such an inner meaning are Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Revelation (*Heavenly Doctrine* §266). Job has an inner meaning, but it is disconnected. This list includes most of the Old Testament and the New Testament and most of the epistles, eliminating the writings of Paul.

In effect, the Bible is the revealed Word, structured so as to be understood simultaneously by human beings and angels in the spiritual and celestial heavens. When a person reads it in its literal sense, spiritual and celestial angels simultaneously understand it in the higher meanings appropriate to their realms. The Bible is the revealed Word through all the worlds. Swedenborg mostly elaborates upon the spiritual sense because people can partly see and understand it. But the celestial sense “can be explained only with difficulty, for it does not fall so much into the thought of the understanding as into the affection of the will” (*Doctrine of Sacred Scripture* §19).<sup>3</sup> In other words, the celestial sense is in feeling and doing. It rises above words. From the Lord proceeds the celestial heaven, and out of that the spiritual, and out of that the natural world. These are all levels of meaning contained in the Bible:

Such is the Word; in its ultimate sense it is natural, in its interior sense it is spiritual, and in its inmost sense it is celestial; and in each sense it is Divine. That such is the nature of the Word does not appear in the sense of the letter, which sense is natural, for the reason that

hitherto the man of this world has known nothing about the heavens; and consequently has not known what the spiritual is, nor what the celestial is.

*Doctrine of Holy Scripture §6*

The distinction between these degrees cannot be known unless correspondence is known. For these three degrees are altogether distinct from each other, like end, cause, and effect.

*Doctrine of Holy Scripture §7*

This inner meaning is the same as the mystical meaning. Swedenborg senses the difficulty in getting it across to people:

The Jews and also some Christians do, it is true, believe that these, along with all other descriptions in the Word, contain some hidden meaning which they call mystical, the reason for that belief being the holiness, so far as the Word is concerned, which has been impressed on them since early childhood. But when asked what that mystical meaning may be, they do not know. One may tell them that because the Word is Divine the mystical meaning within it must of necessity be the kind of meaning the angels in heaven understand, and that the Word cannot have any other mystical content. . . . One may in addition tell them that this mystical meaning understood by the angels in heaven is nothing else than what is called spiritual and celestial, the sole subject of which is the Lord, His kingdom and the Church, and consequently good and truth, and that if they knew what good and truth were, or what love and faith were, they would also be acquainted with that mystical sense. Yet scarcely any Jew or Christian believes any of this knowledge at the present day that any mention of that which is celestial and spiritual is barely intelligible to them. But even so, because in the Lord's Divine mercy I have been allowed to be simultaneously in heaven as a spirit and on earth as a man, and consequently to talk to angels, doing so now without a break for many years, what else can I do but disclose those things which are called the mystical contents of the Word, that is, its interiors, which are the spiritual and celestial things of the Lord's kingdom.

*Arcana Coelestia §4923*

It took a man who had direct and long association with angels to see and learn the wide acceptance in heaven of this inner meaning. Because the Word is written in correspondences, it permits a conjunction of the human being with the heavens and with the Lord through the Word.

The preceding chapter dealt with the breadth of the idea of correspondences or symbolic language. It is an ancient and very common idea, having appeared at various times as the source of pictographic writing, myth, occult sciences, ceremony, and even modern plays and poetry, psychosomatic medicine, and projective tests.

What seems mysterious is that the symbol reaches beyond the simple things. It represents a host of circumstances that may occur anywhere, anytime. The symbolic ceremonial occasion represents all occasions. The dynamism of the symbol lives insofar as it echoes in a person. Witness ancient symbols whose sense we have now lost. They became just museum

artifacts of a past age. An example would be a Cretan figure of the Magna Mater. The little clay figure represented all the possibilities of motherliness. Volumes could be written of its implications. The symbol lives only within the one who feels its implications. True idolatry was rarely practiced. Just as the Roman Catholic genuflects before a plaster Virgin Mary, because of what is being represented, ancient peoples also genuflected before their symbols, keys to larger worlds. Thus, in a complex manner, this is what Swedenborg's language of biblical correspondences is involved with. It relates to the most ancient, honorable, and varied traditions. The daring aspect is that he was unlocking the western world's key of keys.

In the first paragraph of *Heaven and Hell*, Swedenborg unfolded the spiritual meaning of a familiar biblical passage:

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn; and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with great power and great glory. And he shall send his angels and a trumpet and a great voice, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

*Matthew 24:29–31*

Those who understand the sense of the letter understand that someday, in a cosmic falling apart of things, Jesus will come and gather his elect together. It is a someday, cataclysmic, final judgment. This literal sense of the letter is true and sacred, yet there is also an inner spiritual sense. Swedenborg described it as it applies to churches, but I will translate it downward to the individual. This is possible because the spiritual sense applies equally to the Lord, the heavens, churches, and individuals: "For the Word of the Lord is such that when it deals with one it is dealing with each and all, the only difference being according to the disposition of each one. This is the universal sense of the Word" (*Arcana Coelestia* §838). A person is a church in the least form. Churches are the ultimates of heaven and represent heaven. Heaven is a representative of the Lord. The spiritual sense carries within it all these levels of meaning. The celestial sense is more difficult to describe, since it is more like feeling and doing than it is ideas. In terms of a person-church, the passage reads as follows:

**BIBLE**

**SPIRITUAL SENSE**

Immediately after the tribulation of those days	When the person-church has come to its end, its extreme state
shall the sun be darkened,	God-love-feeling will no longer be known.
the moon shall not give her light,	Faith, or all our ideas of how things are, will fall into darkness
and the stars shall fall from heaven,	All the little guides we had will fail us
And the powers of the heavens shall be shaken;	It is a total, awesome, and terrible change
and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven;	In this extreme state, each shall know the root of humanness.
and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn;	The person will be in total mourning
and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with great power and great glory.	Reduced to his most extreme state, in the clouds of his understanding, shall appear the Only Man, the only power left.
And he shall send his angels with a trumpet and a great voice,	Out of this Only One, will come powers to rescue the person—
and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.	What remains of good in the person (the elect) will be united into a One.

A few comments will deepen an appreciation of the correspondences involved. “Those days” here refers to any day of great tribulation. The passage is speaking spiritually of any person, any church, any time. The spiritual meaning transcends time and is speaking of a general truth. “The sun” that is darkened refers to the Lord. The main light will no longer shine. Angels know the Lord as the sun of heaven. “The moon” shines by light reflected from the sun. This is like faith, whose source of light is the Lord-Sun. Or this relates to thought or faith (reflected, light of moon) being secondary to feeling (sun), to the One Life. God is primal; we are secondary. Love-feeling is primal; without it, the light-heat goes out of



faith, all the dim light we have of ideas that guide us. The meaning is similar to the stars' fall. There is nothing left to guide the person-church. He is reduced to a most extreme state. The Son of man is an ancient idea whose meaning we've almost lost. Most everyone takes it to mean Jesus Christ, which is one level of meaning. God is the Only Man. The Son of man is the representative of this one. It might be called the core of the individual personal identity. Swedenborg says that the phrase "Son of man" is consistently used where redemption, salvation, reformation, and regeneration are spoken of (*Doctrine of Life* §23).<sup>4</sup> This is the core of meaning of this passage. The person-church's salvation is being spoken of. "Clouds of heaven" represents our foggy, clouded understanding of what is really happening in this extreme state. "Trumpet and a great voice" represents the overwhelming powers the person-church is caught in. "Four winds" is an ancient idea: the number four represents all places—the total—and is related to the four points of the compass. Jung and many Eastern religions represent the fundamental Self as a fourfold mandala.

This passage, then, speaks symbolically or representatively of everyone's situation when they've really had it. It is the picture of the extreme limit of personal loss and of something coming from beyond the self to rescue the person. It happens to everyone. It happens to churches when they go through the agony of dying. It is an all-souls, all-places, all-times description of what happens in the extremes of dying and coming to life again. Bear in mind that Swedenborg is not undoing or violating the literal meaning. That stands as true. But whereas the sense of the letter seems to speak of a one-time, someday cataclysmic event, in a spiritual sense it describes what almost everyone has known and will know. The awesome sweep and power of Swedenborg's insights into the spiritual meaning come from this. *It is alive and true for everyone. It will always be true. It is the nature of things.* Hence it is sacred, or terribly valuable. It is perfectly appropriate for each person to think back on the most extreme situation in his or her life and see the parallels with this passage. Then it no longer seems simply like picturesque speech but more like an awesome picture of reality.

Another example illustrates what Swedenborg found. The scene is from Genesis. The prophet Noah, warned of a flood, has built an ark that contains all life in it. The image of a man gathering up all his life and trying to weather a great storm should not be too difficult to recognize. The person is

trying to weather great difficulty. “Noah” literally means “rest.” It is unfortunate that these meanings, which are apparent to those who read Hebrew, are lost in the translation.<sup>5</sup> Noah is appropriate in several senses. He is, in effect, the remaining one, the rest, the one left over, what survives. In the story, he is also concerned to find a place to rest. In its inner meaning, this relates to the man in adversity trying to find what is right and good, where he may rest. Noah has suffered through a long period of storm. His vessel comes to rest on Mount Ararat (light). His troubles aren’t over, for other than the light that holds up his vessel (his life), there is no place to rest. The rest of the earth is flooded. The psychological issue is how the man who has locked up himself against adversity can finally find rest and freedom. Here is the passage found in Genesis 8:6–13 and its explication:

<b>BIBLE</b>	<b>SPIRITUAL SENSE</b>
And it came to pass at the end of forty days	At the end of a complete period of trial
that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made	he made an effort to understand his situation (open the window)
and he sent forth a raven,	He acted out of doubt and falsity (raven, black, ignorance, falsity).
and it went forth going and returning	He was uncertain and ambivalent.
until the waters were dried up from off the earth	His situation remained as before until the Lord made it better.
and he sent forth a dove from him	And he expressed a gentle hope
to see if the waters were abated from off the faces of the ground.	to see if he would be permitted to begin life again.
And the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot.	His hope found no place to be.
And she returned unto him to the ark, for the waters were on the faces of the whole earth;	so he withdrew into himself again. Adversity still reigns.
and he put forth his hand and took her, and brought her unto him in the	He still acts by his own powers to protect himself.

ark.

And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark;	He awaits God's time and will, and tries again
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And the dove came back to him at eventide	And hope shows just the beginning
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and lo, in her mouth an olive leaf plucked off	She shows (mouth) a little (leaf) of love's (olive) faith (plucked off).
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So Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.	The ground of being is less covered now by falsity and doubt.
-----------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------

And he stayed yet other seven days and sent forth the dove and she returned not again unto him anymore.	He awaits God's will and this time finds freedom.
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Noah is shortly to find rest on the ground that permits his life (the animals in the ark) to be free. Resting on a mountain of light, or on the beginning of understanding, in the midst of adversity, he first sends out a black bird, the raven. The raven has often been seen as symbolic of death or at least great difficulty. After so much adversity, what he sends out is black. This black mood (doubt, ignorance) didn't find ground. Then he sends out a dove, which is more representative of gentle hope or even of the Holy Spirit. The bird goes out and back (hope, ambivalence, withdrawal again into the ark).

To show Swedenborg's scholarship, he examined in detail just the matter of Noah's taking the dove in hand and returning it to the ark. For pages he shows dozens of biblical quotes using the word "hand," which, as we saw earlier, means personal power: "'Moab will stretch out his *hands* in the midst of him as a swimmer does to swim, but He will lay low his pride together with the powerfulness of his *hands*.' 'Hands' stands for his own power resulting from projection of self above others, and so from pride" (*Arcana Coelestia* §878). Swedenborg goes into seventeen other biblical passages showing the use of the word *hand* to denote personal power. The reader begins to get a sense of the consistency of biblical symbolism. The hand representing personal power doesn't seem so strange; so, in putting

forth his hand and taking the dove, Noah was still acting by his personal powers. The person of the church doesn't find ground until he acts from what transcends him.

Under this analysis, the tiniest details come to life. Why a raven at first and a dove later? Now we know. The faces of the ground is an unusual experience. Swedenborg says *face* corresponds to *mind* (*Arcana Coelestia* §§4791, 4805); face (surface, what appears) equals mind; "faces of the ground" means the superficial appearance of what supports our existence. Noah, the survivor of great trials and temptations, is still thinking superficially. But he is looking for the faces of the ground, where his life can begin again. It would be nice to release the pent-up life in the ark and find some ground to rely upon instead of being perched so long in stress and uncertainty. Again, this is an image of every human being. Everyone has been locked up in his or her own life concerns, trying to survive adversity. Each seeks some outside ground, somewhere to rest. Noah waited another seven days (a whole, complete period—that is, until God wills) and this time the dove came back with a freshly plucked olive leaf. The olive was symbolic of love to the ancients because of the pleasant sensual quality of its oil. Rest is given in God's time (40 days, plus 7, plus 7).

This interpretation only touches upon the meanings in this passage. There is much more. Christ was tempted for forty days. The earth was made in seven. But the basic meaning can be seen of a person in adversity, waiting, sending out hope after hope, only finding rest in God's time. The whole passage refers to the regeneration or remaking of a human being in the spiritual sense. Everyone has been locked up in his or her own life and concerns and seeks some outside ground, somewhere to rest.

I hope the reader is getting a sense of how often this spiritual language is speaking of our intimate experiences. These excerpts leave out Swedenborg's tremendous scholarship and gradual unfolding of ideas that make the spiritual interpretation more convincing. Swedenborg isn't drawing on chance connections. If you doubt that Noah's taking the dove into his hand and putting it in the ark means withdrawing into his own powers, then he amply reviews the use of *hand* in the Bible to show its inner meaning. But most of all, these quaint ancient stories come alive in the tiniest details of everyone's life. If Swedenborg is correct, it is appalling that so much meaning should be locked up and forgotten in an ancient book.

Let us examine the inner implications of the well-known opening passage of Genesis. On the surface, it describes the six days of creation of the earth, all life and the human being. In its symbolic sense, it speaks of the inner nature of humankind, churches, and the essential vitality of existence. The earth created is humankind, any person. It speaks of what is always true, the nature of things, what can be confirmed by any life. I realize that, without some experience with the symbolic language of the unconscious, the interpretation given here will seem to some to be a bit farfetched. Another disadvantage is that the few passages interpreted here Swedenborg backs up with thirty-two pages of careful development of meaning and numerous biblical parallels. Yet even those inexperienced in this kind of language may at least see the possibility that Swedenborg may have found two new levels of meaning. Again, these new levels do not contradict or contravene the literal meanings. The literal is true, but the spiritual is also true, a matter of truths within truths. Swedenborg makes clear that there are also celestial levels of meaning, the common understanding of celestial angels. These are like myriads to one and beyond a simple exposition. In these interpretations, I have taken the liberty to follow Swedenborg's meanings and also to clarify them in the direction of psychological meaning in modern terms:

<b>BIBLE</b>	<b>SPIRITUAL SENSE</b>
In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.	Life begins when God creates the internal person (heaven, the higher aspect) and the external person (earth, body, lower aspect).
And the earth was a void and emptiness, and thick darkness was upon the faces of the deep.	The external person begins in great ignorance and instinct (darkness upon the faces of the deep).

Just as an example of a similar linking of our ignorance and emptiness, Swedenborg quotes Jeremiah: "My people are stupid; they have not known me; they are foolish sons, are not intelligent; they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. I beheld the earth, and lo a void and emptiness" (Jeremiah 4:22–23).

And the spirit of God moved upon the faces of the waters.

And the life of God animates our unconscious tendencies (waters equal all the potential within mind, faces of waters equal tendencies, waves, currents).

And God said, let there be light, and there was light.

And God created awareness (God said—God's will takes the form of let there be—and there was. We are seeing an active creation of the Lord).

And God saw the light, that it was good,

and God distinguished between the light and the darkness. And God called the light day, and the darkness He called night.

And the Divine is aware of the goodness (or use) of this creation, which begins to make fundamental distinctions between what is full awareness and of God (daylight) and limited awareness and of humankind (night).

And the evening and the morning were the first day.

From the darkness to the morning of awareness is called the first day of creation.

It begins to be apparent that some kind of unfolding has started that begins by the distinction of some great polar opposites, heaven-earth, day-night, light-darkness. The distinction is between a higher and lower, or a fullness of understanding as against a limitation.

### **BIBLE**

And God said, let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it distinguish between the waters and the waters.

### **SPIRITUAL SENSE**

The internal of the human being is opened up (expanse in the midst of the waters) and from it the distinction of the internal and the external person (between waters and waters).

Later we will see that one of the waters gives birth to land, which is the firmer, ego consciousness.

And the evening and the morning were the second day.

And God said, let the waters under the heaven be gathered together to one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so.

And God called the dry land earth, and the gathering together of the waters called He seas; the God saw that it was good.

And God said, let the earth

bring forth the tender herb,

the herb yielding seed and the fruit-tree bearing fruit after its kind whose seed is in itself, upon the earth.

And it was so.

And the earth brought forth the tender herb, the herb yielding seed after its kind, and the tree bearing fruit, whose seed is in itself, after its kind;

and God saw it was good.

And the evening and morning were the third day.

And this growth of awareness is the second day of creation.

This distinguishes what is of God (waters under heaven) and human consciousness (dry land appears.)

And the person's consciousness is his place (earth) and the rest is his potential (seas). This process is good. (It is good that a person has a place in the midst of the seas to work from.)

Out of God's will, as though from the person himself,

appears the beginnings of ideas (outgrowths of consciousness)

which have more and more life in themselves in the person's consciousness (upon the earth).

This follows God's will.

(It reemphasizes that this growth appears to arise from the person himself, even though it follows God's will.)

The Divine sees the good in this process.

This is the third day or stage in the creation of the human being.

At this point, the higher and lower aspects of humankind are distinguished and our thinking begins to bear fruit as though through our own powers.

And God said, let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens,

to distinguish between the day and the night;

and let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days, and for years;

and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens,

to give light upon the earth;

and it was so.

And God made two great lights, the great light to rule by day,

and the lesser light to rule by night;

God willed that there be awarenesses (light) in the internal person (expanse of heaven).

Which makes basic distinctions,

which will always serve as a guide

in the internal of understanding

to guide the limited ego-consciousness,

and God's will is realized.

And God made two great guides, love/will (sun, warmth, heat) to guide in the most direct way (by day)

and faith/understanding (moon, reflected light of sun) to guide in less clear circumstances

### **BIBLE**

and the stars.

And God set them in the expanse of the heavens,

to give light upon the earth.

And to rule in the day, and in the night, and to distinguish between the light and the darkness

### **SPIRITUAL SENSE**

and the myriad of tiny guides in the less clear circumstances.

And God made these an integral part of the inner person

to guide the limited consciousness ego

and to rule the full understanding (day) or the limited (night) and to



	distinguish truth (light) and falsity (darkness).
and God saw it was good.	And the Divine sees the good in this (through all lives, in all creation).
And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.	And this is the fourth stage or day of human development.

At this point, the person functions with useful ideas of his or her own (tender herbs) and has the massive internal guidance system of love-will–Divine good and, when this isn’t functioning (at night), the lesser guides of faith-understanding-intellect.

And God said, let the waters cause to creep forth the creeping things, the living soul;	Now the person begins to live. (Prior to this his life was inanimate, that is, dry land, plants. Now he begins to live, that is, acts within the love/will of God.)
and let fowl fly above the earth	and begins to have perspective on the lesser aspects of his life
upon the faces of the expanse of the heavens.	which is the surface of the inner person.
And God created great whales.	Out of the unconscious (the sea) is created great forces with much life in them (great whales).
And every living soul that creepeth, which the waters made to creep forth,	And every living tendency that comes out of the unconscious
after their kinds, and every winged fowl after its kind;	is interrelated after its kinds
and God saw it was good.	and the Divine sees the use in this.
And God blessed them, saying, be fruitful and multiply,	This life from God seems to have love (fruitful) and understanding (multiply) in itself

and fill the waters in the seas, and the fowl shall be multiplied in the earth.

And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

And God said, let the earth bring forth the living soul after its kind,

the beast, and the moving thing and the wild animal of the earth after its kind; and it was so.

And God made the wild animal after its kind, and the beast after its kind, and everything that creepeth on the ground after its kind;

and God saw it was good.

And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness;

and fills the mind (waters in the seas) and experience of each person (the earth).

And this is the fifth stage in the creation of the person.

There emerged from the person (earth) living tendencies,

instincts and feelings,

and pleasures of the senses.

And these became real and seem to arise from their own kind, gentle affections from the gentle, and sense pleasure from the sensual,

and the Divine saw the use in this.

This person is to be like God.

To people in the Most Ancient Church with whom the Lord spoke face to face, the Lord appeared as Man. (Much can be told about those people, but this is not the time to do so.) For this reason they called nobody man except the Lord and whatever may have been His. They did not even call themselves man. . . . In the Prophets therefore, in the highest sense, “man” and “son of man” are used to mean the Lord. In the internal sense they are used to mean wisdom and intelligence.

*Arcana Coelestia §49*

## **BIBLE**

and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the heavens, and over the beast, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

And God created man in his own image

## **SPIRITUAL SENSE**

and have dominion over all aspects of his life.

an is given the power of understanding

in the image of God created He him; and will.

male and female created He them.      Understanding and will, the two that  
can be one.

What “male and female” is used to mean in the internal sense was very well known in the Most Ancient Church, but when among later generations the interior sense of the Word was lost, so too was this particular arcanum. Marriages gave them their highest forms of happiness and delight; and they used to liken to a marriage anything that could be likened to it. . . . For this reason they called the understanding in the spiritual man Male and the will Female, and when the two acted as one, they called it Marriage.

*Arcana Coelestia §54*

### **BIBLE**

### **SPIRITUAL SENSE**

And God blessed them, and God said      Such a person is to do what is good  
unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply,      (fruitful) and true (multiply),  
and replenish the earth      which is to benefit to the whole  
person,

and subdue it;

by bringing him into control

and have dominion over the fish of  
the sea, and over the fowl of the  
heavens, and over every living thing  
that creepeth upon the earth.

and dominion over all his tendencies.

And God said, Behold I give you  
every herb bearing seed which is  
upon the faces of all the earth, and  
every tree in which is fruit; the tree  
yielding seed, to you it shall be for  
food.

He is given every truth which  
regards use (herb bearing seed), the  
good of faith (tree which is in fruit),  
and spiritual guidance (tree yielding  
seed).

And every wild animal of the earth,      To every aspect of the person in  
and to every fowl of the heavens, and      which there is spiritual life (a living  
to everything that creepeth upon the      soul), the Lord gives spiritual food  
earth, wherein there is a living soul, I      (green herb).  
give every green herb for food; and it  
was so.

And God saw everything that He had      God saw all the implications in what  
made, and behold it was very good.      He had done, and it was very good.

And the evening and the morning  
were the sixth day.

And this is the progression to the  
sixth day of creation.

There are many other meanings in this section of Genesis, some of which Swedenborg touched on, some of which he only implied. Basically, the section deals with, in the internal sense, the development of a person from complete spiritual ignorance (void and empty) to the beginning differentiation of what is from God (the heavens) and humankind (earth), to greater and greater understanding, livingness (plants, fish, animals), to the person who becomes the image of God. This person still has much to do to subdue and come into control over his tendencies. These six days of creation have not yet reached the seventh day in which the soul can rest.

It would be sufficient, for my purposes, if the reader sees only the possibility that familiar passages may have another inner, more psychological and spiritual level of meaning. To really appreciate this level requires some spiritual search, a need to know. Missing here is Swedenborg's comparison with parallel passages and his careful scholarship. He also referred to ancient practices that throw light on the inner meaning. Without this, for instance, it isn't immediately apparent how male and female are related to understanding and will, nor the happy marriage of these, in which what one understands and believes is made real by will or action, hence bringing fruitfulness and multiplication into one's life. Faith is made real by charity, and this is called a happy marriage. Whereas we have to struggle somewhat to grasp this spiritual language, angels find it easier, as illustrated by an incident in heaven that Swedenborg reported:

When I was reading the Word certain persons were brought into the outer court of heaven, and from there they spoke to me. They kept on saying that they did not understand the smallest detail of any word or letter in it, only what those things meant in the sense that lies next within it. They declared that these things were so beautiful, so arranged and ordered, and for them so moving, that they called them glory.

*Arcana Coelestia* §65

Swedenborg's exegetical works are too rich and varied to be simply summarized. Since spirit and life are much the same, the inner sense is always closer to the nooks and crannies of human experience and human travail. This inner sense speaks of life, everyone's life, of churches, of

Christ's life, of the Lord. In a fundamental way, each person is the Lord trying to find his or her way back home.

Swedenborg's thesis of inner meaning is decidedly too rich, too extensive, and too important to be dismissed out of hand. He almost requires the reader to be in a real spiritual search, to learn the symbolic language of the inner life, and then to study the Bible and its inner meanings at great length before a judgment can be made. But this much can be said. Those who have found this inner thread of meaning find that the Bible is incredibly rich, accurate, and relevant to our everyday life.

Though at times Swedenborg's exegesis seems stiff and repetitious, he has his finger on symbolic processes that are still native to us in dreams. Much of this biblical symbolism can still be found in the human species, though this is not widely known. We have lost touch with these processes, which Swedenborg said the ancients knew quite well, which some primitive peoples understand today, and which are also the natural language of the unconscious.

Swedenborg's biblical exegesis is the richest part of his works, making up a half or better of his theological works. The very richness of this side of his work is another sign that old Emanuel had really journeyed far.

## THE ONE PRESENT



ESSENTIALLY SWEDENBORG WAS ATTEMPTING TO understand and describe all of life. His personal journey went through the sciences and psychology to the most general understanding possible in the wisdom of theology. By examining separate aspects of Swedenborg's works at a time, I have perhaps presented too static a picture of the whole. Now I want to show something of the whole canvas that Swedenborg has painted.

The first issue is what kind of knowledge is involved in his theological works and on what authority was it presented? Swedenborg remained the same empiricist who had earlier described the mining and smelting of copper and all the other sciences even when he was dealing with the subtleties of the inner world. At no point in his later critical psychological-theological works was he theorizing or speculating. He could illustrate any point by personal experiences, often too numerous to detail. As a psychologist he was closest to the phenomenologist, who is really content to discover and describe the shape of human experience. Although this is Swedenborg's experience, he was potentially describing all of human experience. Nothing need be taken on his authority. Each person can check it for himself because he is referring to the generally real.

If we look at these works as essentially theological, the issues remain the same. It is possible, though not common, for everyone to experience the

higher worlds and the existence of God. As our understanding of the psychological inner nature of these worlds deepens, the experience comes closer to each of us. In some way, Swedenborg saw farther and clearer than most, but what he brought back helped others to see almost as well.

Although Swedenborg had much social intercourse with angels, spirits, and demons, he clearly indicated that he was ultimately instructed only by the Lord. The Lord is the ultimate authority, and the Bible is the revealed authority for what he has to say; but ultimately this refers back to the form of human experience. The spiritual world, the Bible, and human experience are interrelated aspects of one reality, life itself. In a real sense, Swedenborg is a latter-day prophet and revelator, and like his ancient predecessors, his task is not to break with ancient traditions in a new breed of understanding, but simply to deepen our understanding of ancient traditions. To attack him is not to attack a peculiar breed of thinking but to attack the real meaning or depth of the ancient tradition. Swedenborg regarded himself as simply a messenger, or a servant, of the Lord. It was clear that he was not to be venerated in any respect for this august role. The celestial angels abhor any attempt to give them credit for their wisdom, and Swedenborg was the same. If there is any good in his work, it is God's, not his. His gift from God extends back into the ancient understandings of humanity (and Swedenborg greatly complimented the earliest peoples) and forward into our understanding based on our own experience. The real basis of authority for his work is, then, in this rich understanding and experience of the Lord, the Bible, ancient traditions, and our present experience. Those who understand Swedenborg partially tend to take apart these realms. Swedenborg dealt with them as essentially one, which for lack of a better term might be called "life."

These two aspects—the personal nature of human experience, which can be checked by everyone, and the nature of the spiritual worlds beyond this one—come together, for one is the inside of the other. *The spiritual worlds beyond this one are the essential nature and potentiality of human experience.* That is why Swedenborg could study dreams, the hypnogogic and trance states, and stumble upon spirits interacting with humankind. That is why psychotics who have partially lost their orientation in relation to this world can find themselves pulled hither and thither by the same spirits who are the unconscious potentials of every person. We are already in the presence of heaven and hell. Heaven and hell in their innermost

nature illustrate our present and future potentials. Rightly understood, the whole of our existence is spiritual. We are, or everything is, because God is, which is understanding spiritually. Spiritual understanding is the inner or more general aspect of psychological or personal understanding. Swedenborg has discovered the one real, the unitary, or only system. Though we can separate out different aspects, it is really one life we are dealing with. To those who are accustomed to and comfortable with interacting parts, this very oneness can be a stumbling block. If one must take it apart, levels of correspondence is one way of doing it. We can look at a plant and try to see how it corresponds with and is an ultimate sign of the spiritual world. As we examine its form, color, fruitfulness, etc., we are beginning to sense those aspects of ourselves that empathize with the plant. Through this livingness, which is ourselves, we can begin to sense the nature of the spiritual worlds. Correspondence emphasizes the hierarchical ordering of existence, yet our experience of correspondence drifts toward the unitary experience of life. The taking apart into aspects is to aid understanding, but the experiential aspect tends to be unitary, which Swedenborg called life and humanness.

The table below shows the hierarchy of existence, with the parallels between the worlds beyond this one and inner experiences. The hierarchy of other worlds is also a hierarchy of reality. The Lord is the Only Real that creates out of himself the whole of existence. God's is not a contingent existence like all other existences. In a sense, each higher level is more real than the level below it. Each level is real in itself, but each reflects by correspondence higher levels that are progressively more generally true, comprehensive, and free. The Lord is the free itself, the ultimate truth, the deepest aspect of humanness. Humanness is the experiential aspect of the hierarchy of worlds. The material world is not diminished in this conception, for it is the ultimate sign and final proof of God's will. Below is shown the parallels between the hierarchy of real worlds and humanness:



## *Hierarchy of the Real*

## *As Humanness*

The Lord		The innermost nature and highest potential of humanness
The three hells: the opposite possibilities	Celestial heaven	The ultimate of peace, love, and unity with all.
	Spiritual heaven	The ultimate of loving others.
	Spiritual/ natural heaven of human potentials	Beginning of realization
	World of spirits	Unconscious tendencies, affects, subconscious
Humanity on earth		Ego awareness
The natural world		Human acts, the ultimate limitations of human existence

There is a beautiful mystical element running through Swedenborg. By mystical, I mean simply what is very great coming into the limited here-and-now. For me, this mystical element entered when Swedenborg spoke of the humanness of the Lord. He gently put his finger on where in all of varied existence the Lord is to be most intimately known: in the very inner connection of humanness to the Divine. There is the pulse of the relationship:

[T]he universe could not have been created unless God were a person.

Focus your thought on the angelic concept of God, of a human God, and as far as you can, eliminate any concept of space, and you will be close to the truth in your thinking.

Some scholars have actually grasped the fact that spirits and angels are not in space because they conceive of spirit as being apart from space. Spirit is like thought. Even though our thought is within us, it enables us to be present somewhere else, no matter how far away. . . . [T]his Person is at the heart of everything created.

*Divine Love and Wisdom* §285

God [is] the essential person, from whom we are human by virtue or our acceptance of love and wisdom.

*Divine Love and Wisdom* §289

Humankind, thought, spirit are in the image of God. God is the essential person. The way to God is through humanness, because it is our closest

approach to the Divine. The Lord is the very core of ourselves:

[I]n the created universe there is nothing living except the Divine-Human One.

*Divine Love and Wisdom §301*

God is a person and in this way is God manifest—not manifest from himself, but manifest in himself. The one who is manifest in himself is the God who is the source of all.

*Divine Love and Wisdom §16*

It is because God is a person that all angels and spirits are perfectly formed people. This is because of heaven's form, which is the same in its largest and its smallest manifestations.

*Divine Love and Wisdom §11*

I go over and over these little gems, seeing new facets each time. Heaven, humanity, God-Man are images of itself in its greatest and least parts. It is like a truth that cannot help but echo itself, however varied its manifestations.

Much religious doctrine puts God beyond any possible grasp. A central meaning of these passages is that God as humanness cannot be missed. Are we not thoroughly human? Though humanness may be like a bottomless well, containing more than can be described, yet it can be known because we are it. I believe this same tendency to know God through humanness is reflected in all the religions in which God comes as a human (Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and others).

[A]ll the things that are seen and heard on heaven's lowest levels are representative of what angels in higher heavens speak and think. . . . [S]uch representative things are present on heaven's lowest levels [because] those who are on heaven's lowest levels have no ability to grasp the more internal aspects of angelic wisdom, only such things as represent them. Furthermore it is in keeping with Divine order that when the higher realities pass down to lower levels they are converted into images bearing a similarity to them and are in this way presented to the outward senses, and so are accommodated to everyone's ability to grasp them.

*Arcana Coelestia §10126*

As a person, I am one of these representations. Through my mind, I see representations emerging from the inner to show up in images. Or the things of the world are representations of me. I too seem to represent. It is all a vast representation:

What is more, the whole of heaven is such that every one is so to speak the focal point of all, for he is the focal point of influxes coming through the heavenly form from all. Consequently the image of heaven is reproduced in everyone, making him a likeness of

heaven and so a human being; for the character of the general whole determines that of any part of the general whole, since the parts must be like their general whole if they are to belong to it.

*Arcana Coelestia* §3633

This single, essential reality is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent . . . [and] is the Lord from eternity, or Jehovah.

*Divine Providence* §157

This mystical here-nowness of Swedenborg shows throughout his works. To recognize it, one need only sense how concretely Swedenborg was referring to the reality of the Divine.

What shall we call the One? Names are culturally bound to time, place, history. Swedenborg refers to hundreds of names of the Divine, especially in the manifold language of correspondences. It is a convention to refer to the Lord as a male: as “he” or “father,” because our language tends to be sexually either/or. In Taoism, the male aspect of the Divine refers to the power to create, make, do. It would be equally possible to speak of the female aspect. The Divine Feminine refers to the steady, quiet sustainer of creation, much like a mother who cares for hearth and children. It would be easy to argue that the Divine Feminine is the more critical, for she gently sustains creation. Swedenborg found both aspects of the Divine.

I am not particularly wedded to any one name of the Divine, partly because of the battles over the names Christ, Allah, Brahma, Buddha. Surely each of these, referring to the All, must be the same? In a way, I like the ancient Jewish tradition of having a name for God that was not pronounceable, except by the rare one who could shout the name as an eruption of his or her whole being. Once, in a vision, I heard it pronounced in a way that could awaken the very rocks. Swedenborg shows that the ancient use of names really meant the nature or the essential quality of the person named. A person was called by whatever fit his or her nature. In this inner, more living sense of name-nature, the One could be called by whatever the person experienced as the nature. Or the One might be called the Only, Here-Now, Very Real, and, even as Swedenborg does, Essential Person. The name-nature can even be concretely defined simply by the doing of any good act, for good is the name-nature of the One. The higher the good done, the better this name-nature is pronounced.

Swedenborg reported that, in heaven, the Lord appears as a sun. The celestial angels always have it in their sight, however they turn. This sun is

high image or representation of the Lord, which radiates as its heat and light divine love and wisdom. This divine love is the life of heaven and, through heaven, each person's actual life. Our feeling of vitality is, then, this love itself. It is impossible to not know it, since it is ourselves. At most, we can limit ourselves by denying it is anything more than just me—as though I make and hold up my own life and all the good I do is wholly my own creation.

Our own sun, which is a representation of heaven, has heat and light as interrelated aspects. The more heat, the more light. The divine love and wisdom or heat and light are interrelated aspects. It is as though the unitary divine manifests in this primal duality. This mysterious and primal duality is everywhere present in Swedenborg. It is variously described as good-truth, charity-faith, wisdom-intelligence, will-understanding, essence-existence. The affective love or warmth is its heart, or innermost nature. The outer truth—faith, intelligence, understanding, existence—is the way it manifests itself. Humanity as a thing, a number, a mere existence is the shell or outer manifestation of this divine love. His inner life is divine love acting. When this inner love comes into act or charity, the Divine has manifested in existence and become real.

Swedenborg always gives this love a more fundamental role than truth, or the outer thingness of existence. This is so whether he is saying that feeling is more fundamental than thought or that charity is more important than faith. He was very firm that religions emphasizing faith were going toward the estranged, intellectual shell of existence. This love-feeling-charity is the will-like mustness of existence. Like the forces of nature, it must do, create, give birth to itself. Our needs with each other are just an aspect of this. The laws of nature are not textbook statements; they are the forces moving the thunderclouds. These are manifestations of the inherent urge of love. Swedenborg's concept is quite the opposite of an abstract idea. As the lightning flashes, thunder rolls, and the rain pours down on you—that is this inner urge, this “mustness,” the willful heart of existence. If the idea doesn't seem concrete enough yet, stand there until the sky clears to sunshine. Go a step further. There is just one heart in all of existence. This Swedenborg called divine love. It is intimately joined inwardly with your own willfulness. I am very much in accord with Zen Buddhism's tendency not to be abstract about the concrete. In a Zen story, a sincere student asks his master to show him the Buddha nature. The master says casually, “You

just had breakfast. Did you wash your dishes?” This is a very precise answer to the student’s question. The Buddha nature is to do the minor good that comes to your hand, that is, wash the dishes. It would belie the Buddha nature to talk of goodness and leave someone else to wash the dishes. For me, Swedenborg has this same concreteness that is so well exemplified in Zen Buddhism, which is perhaps why the Zen master Daisetz Suzuki translated Swedenborg into Japanese.<sup>1</sup>

Let us look at this primal duality in an opposite way. Insofar as I identify with my outward aspects—myself as body, as thought—I am denying or overlooking the root of my existence. I become a thing among things, in competition with other things for existence. We could also choose to enlarge our concept of identity to include the whole background of affects—feeling, love, life emerging. The truth is that both are real, inner and outer, love and truth, yin and yang, and all the related dualities. This general duality is the source of the acts by which what wants to be becomes really something. In a human sense, it is the source of our need to understand what is and to be. When we identify both with the inner becoming and the outer body self, we accept our full scope and also the dependence of our existence. We do not make the background sea of feeling from which our inner lives emerge. We are the onlooking participants in the lives that emerge through us. The person whose identity is placed at the interface of feeling-love becomes real as this now experience senses he is participating in a process larger than himself. He says to himself that there is more than himself. This is to acknowledge God (by whatever name). God here means that which is bigger than all of us. The one who searches within, into his own nature, searches for this Bigger One. The exploration of self, psychology, and the religions are fundamentally the same thing. The religious quest gives a comprehensive name to the larger One sought after. Psychology gives it more limited names (being, my nature, the integrated self, etc.) and waits to see its nature to know what it is.

If we turn this duality outward, it is equally illuminating. Inward love, the life of the individual, flows into the body and act. Swedenborg was saying in a very real sense that the Lord suffers a stillbirth until each person acts by the good that he or she knows. This primeval good is a kind of general impulse toward existence. It must become real, exist. What is the manifestation of the primal good? It is many and all existences. It is the whole physical universe. An existence for the primal good that is nearer to

its real nature occurs when a person feels and understands the good. Swedenborg speaks of this as the Second Coming of the Lord. The Lord comes here and there, willy-nilly, on the clouds of human understanding. The Second Coming occurs when humankind understands the Word. Swedenborg used the Word to mean both the Bible and, inwardly, as God himself: “Most people think that the Word or Divine Truth is merely what Jehovah has spoken and what He commands so to be done. . . . But in fact it is the Essential Being itself, the source from which all things exist and the means by which they are kept in existence” (*Arcana Coelestia* §7678). The person whose understanding is opened and meets God knows the real Second Coming, the incarnation.

There is a more concrete form for this primal good to come into existence. In the concept of uses, Swedenborg’s whole tour of heaven and hell comes to earth in the commonplace. The good that is in us is nothing until it comes into existence as uses. The floor needs sweeping, something needs fixing, you are a shoemaker with shoes to repair, a friend needs you to hear him—uses: “[L]ove is the purpose, wisdom the means, and service the result. Further, service is the composite, vessel, and foundation of wisdom and love, such a composite and such a vessel that every bit of love and every bit of wisdom is actively present in it. . . . [W]hat is present in service are all the elements of love and wisdom that are of the same kind, harmonious” (*Divine Love and Wisdom* §213). Use is where divine love comes to earth in actuality, in something done for the environment. Love-good yearns to be real. Just as wisdom is the form of good, our good acts are its becoming real. We are not the first cause of good, just as we are recipients of life, not its cause. The good man sees how much he is a participant, almost an onlooker, in the sequence of life processes. The evil man overly credits himself, “evil” meaning cutting off.

The heart of the difficulties in our life can be described in several ways. The Lord is the ultimately free. We are the image or representation of that freedom in our capacity to choose. The love that animates existence wills that we be free to choose. Because of the limitations of our existence, we are partially bound and partially free. What we do with our corner of freedom sets our eternal existence. Heaven and hell are the polar opposites that illustrate the full scope of possibilities of this freedom. The general drift of the hierarchy of heaven is toward joining with others, loving, toward the unitary oneness of the Lord. The general drift of hell is toward

separation, division, cutting off, and struggle against others. We clearly have the foretaste of both possibilities in this world.

In a sense, our freedom is dreadful. Although we have sufficient road signs or guides, especially in the religious traditions, it is easy enough to doubt them and get lost with or without them. This freedom implies that it was meant that we should struggle, and each find his way on his own. Swedenborg was clear that only what we accomplish with our own freedom lasts to eternity. We are not bound any other way. Also, the inner aspect belies outer appearance. He cites the case of madmen who, when their interiors were opened in the world of spirits, became quite sane. There are also men who look reasonable in the light of this world but who become insane and bind themselves to hell when their interiors are opened. This is another sense in which our existences are contingent. Although we hope to be doing things right, we can't really judge until the outer shells of our existence are removed; this is the judgment that the ancient tradition speaks of. In our corner of freedom, we struggle in the dim light of our understanding and our habits. But it should be cheering to discover that we are judged by the inner quality or interior in our acts, not so much by the outer consequence.

Where do trials and tribulations fit into this? It was not meant that existence would be all smooth and simple, like being bottle-fed on divine pabulum. Our existence must have the full range of possibilities. Darkness illuminates light. Can the infant who dies in innocence ascend to the highest heaven? Not immediately. The infant has much to learn. Trials and tribulation are echoed inwardly in the imagery of the inner life, which is one side of the guidance system; difficulties in the material world are the other side of it. Swedenborg once remarked that, if the Lord wished to condemn anyone, he would give that person all he or she wished. This would be the profoundest of all condemnations.

One of the difficulties between God and us is that we have our immediate needs in mind. The Lord rules existence in terms of our ultimate good. Our perspective is too small:

It has not yet been realized that divine providence focuses on our eternal state at every step of our journey. It cannot focus on anything else because Divinity is infinite and eternal, and what is infinite or eternal or divine is not in time. It therefore sees the whole future as present. Since this is the nature of Divinity, it follows that there is something eternal in everything it does, overall and in detail.

People who think in terms of time and space find this hard to grasp, though, not only because they love temporal matters but also because they think in terms of what is present to people in the world and not what is present to people in heaven. This latter is as remote from them as the ends of the earth. However, people who are engaged with divinity base their thinking on the Lord and are thinking in eternal terms even while they think about what is present to them; so they say to themselves, “What is anything that is not eternal?”

*Divine Providence §59*

What a line: “What is anything that is not eternal?”! It should be carved deeply over the door to one’s study. But Swedenborg continues:

“Aren’t temporal things nothing at all by comparison, and don’t they become nothing when they end?” What is eternal is different. It simply is because there is no limit to its being.

Thinking like this is thinking in terms of eternity even while we are thinking about what is present; and when we both think and live this way, then emanating divinity with us, or divine providence, focuses on the state of our eternal life in heaven at every step of our journey, and is leading us to it.

*Divine Providence §59*

The Lord, acting in relation to our ultimate good, can lead where we would not choose to go. A practical consequence of this is that the person having great troubles can look in them for usefulness. Swedenborg spoke of vastation, a kind of being brought down by the Lord. It happens here and even to angels in heaven. A depressed mood is a good example. We go along feeling that all is going well only to be stopped and brought down by depression. Depression destroys false values. It occurs when we presume too much, assume too much power or greatness for ourselves. God speaks.

I form light and create darkness,  
I make weal and create woe,  
I am the Lord, who do all these things.

\* \* \*

“Woe to him who strives with his Maker,  
an earthen vessel with the potter!  
Does the clay say to him who fashions it,  
‘What are you making?’  
or ‘Your work has no handles?’  
Woe to him who says to a father,  
‘What are you begetting?’  
or to a woman, ‘With what are you in travail?’”  
Thus says the Lord,  
The Holy One of Israel, and his Maker:  
“Will you question me about my children,  
or command me concerning the work of my hands?  
I make the earth,



and created man upon it;  
it was my hands that stretched out the heavens,  
and I command all their host.” (Isaiah 45:7–13)

We are the pot that should realize it was fashioned. The missing handles, the inconvenience of our existence, reflect in the trials and tribulations we question the most. These experiences would be rough and unfair except from the viewpoint of our eternal destiny. Our lives were not designed to be exactly as we wish.

This vastation saves us in an eternal sense. We can cooperate with the natural process by looking for the usefulness in the breakdown of old values so that new ones may grow instead. Inwardly and outwardly we are educated in this schoolhouse world. The good person feels a respectful part of the more; the evil one cuts himself off by assuming he is the whole thing. Amplifying this into other worlds, the cutting off, the isolation, is hell. Working with all the rest is heaven. This scope of existence illustrates our freedom and God’s. Our limited freedom is the little image of Gods. It is sinful to divide up the one life; love sees its unity.

There is a lovely undercurrent in Swedenborg, as in most religions that say there is only one life: “As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40). Out of this arises the Golden Rule, which is the heart of several religions besides Christianity. I participate in a life and so do you. Perhaps we are all the one life. So the Eskimo who must kill a polar bear to live pauses to wish the bear’s departing spirit well. The one who loves can see similarities, points of agreement, and possible union. The one who is cut off from himself cuts off others and finds reasons for differences. In effect, the journey of this primal good from the Lord, through the heavens, through humankind into action heads back to itself, the unity of all things that love intimates. The good I do for another unites us. All our goods or uses unite humankind into a heaven where we can sense the oneness of things, the Lord.

The following are section headings from *Divine Providence* §27:

1. Heaven is union with the Lord.
2. Our nature from creation enables us to be more and more closely united to the Lord.
3. The more closely we are united to the Lord, the wiser we become.
4. The more closely we are united to the Lord, the happier we become.

5. The more closely we are united to the Lord, the more clearly we seem to have our own identity, and yet the more obvious it is to us that we belong to the Lord.

Only theory suggests that to be the Lord's is to suffer a loss of freedom. The experience is one of being more in control, being able to exercise more power, and yet to know that the real power comes from beyond the little ego self. Freedom is to be able to do what one loves most. The Lord's person carries into action what he or she loves most. None of this is limited to high, noble-sounding acts. The man who loves laying bricks and lays them well for a fair price is doing enough to realize heaven. A simple kindness to another person is the true precursor of heaven and has its immediate reward in the unity with the other person. Swedenborg always combined the highest and the lowest. In a real sense, his exploration of heaven and hell leads to the opposite of otherworldliness. Heaven and hell are here all the time. Grasp the experience of making heaven and hell here to shape your eternal destiny as you choose. You already know heaven and hell because you already participate in a society of people like yourself in some spiritual realm; eventually, you will see more fully how true this is.

Throughout, Swedenborg remained in touch with this world, with the simple and even with the material. He felt later that his long tour through science was really just preparation where he learned how far his own projections and theorizing could carry him. He went too far with theory when he did his own anatomical dissections. Later he kept just to the anatomical observations of others. Swedenborg's capacity to remain grounded in the limited, simple, and obvious while also dealing with the highest truths of the spiritual worlds heightens his existential and mystical quality. Here, there; this, that; all others, myself; all one. The oneness of things is the always present, underlying reality. By referring to it as life, or even more personally as humanness, Swedenborg again remains in the here-now, real. Thank heavens God is human, and hence understandable. This is an underlying meaning of God's appearing as Jesus Christ. Some like their God remote, others near at hand. What Swedenborg found and described was simultaneously both. The most ultimate of all is very near at hand. They are the same.

A critical question is who did Swedenborg say would be saved. Translating the ancient idea of being saved into the present context, those

saved are experiencing the enlarging reality of existence. The damned suffer a constricted existence. They miss out. Swedenborg's answer to this question is more generous than that found in most of the world's religious literature. All will be saved who act by the good that they know. I believe that this implies a struggle and search. Most people's highest good is not a simple cookbook set of rules. It is more of a struggle, like trying to understand and be helpful to a friend. What is really good for the friend is not always simple; it involves searching and trying to understand. The dictum that all will be saved who act by the good they know takes Swedenborg into the universal of religion. Swedenborg saw this church of all those who act by the good they know as it was being established in heaven: the church of the New Jerusalem. One should always suspect that any term used in heaven has very broad, unitive meanings. The New Jerusalem is the New Church being established by the Lord, treated of in Apocalypse 21 and 22, the bride and wife of the Lamb. This is a lovely image of love, tenderness, and union between the initiating maleness of the Lord and the female receptivity of churches, an image both human and sacred. The image carries with it all the associations of two lovers who want to be joined and even of the troubles and misunderstandings that arise between lovers. In his *Brief Exposition of the Doctrine of the New Church* (§§99–104), Swedenborg showed the many biblical passages in which Jerusalem was obviously not simply a city, or even a church in the limited sense: "Behold I create a *new heaven and a new earth*, and the former shall not be remembered; behold *I will create Jerusalem*, an exaltation, and her people a gladness, that I may exult over *Jerusalem*, and be glad over my people" (Isaiah 65:17–19). He went on to cite many passages with a similar import (Isaiah 62:1–4, 11, 12; Isaiah 52: 1, 2, 6, 9; Zephaniah 3:14–17, 20; Zechariah 8:3, 20–23; Joel 4:17–21, and others).

The mystery is cleared when we consider who is to be saved, those who will find salvation:

[I]t is evident that the Lord's Church is not in this particular location or in that, but that it resides wherever people lead lives in keeping with the commandments of charity, both within the kingdoms in which the Church exists and outside them. So it is that the Lord's Church is spread throughout the whole world, and yet is one; for when life constitutes the Church, and not doctrine separated from life, there is one Church. But when doctrine constitutes the Church there are many.

Swedenborg is clear: the church is within and without the Christian church. It is everywhere that people act in charity to each other. Differences in doctrine seem to separate churches, yet when you look at their life, it is one. He refers to the great variety of societies in heaven, and yet they act as a one, the Grand Man: “Variations in matters of doctrine and in forms of worship are like the variations that exist with the physical senses and with the inner parts of man’s body” (*Arcana Coelestia* §1285). And like the human being, they form one being:

[T]he Lord’s church is spread throughout the whole world. It is universal, then, and consists of all individuals who have lived in the virtue of thoughtfulness according to the principles of their religions.

*Heaven and Hell* §328

Many other passages could also be cited (*Divine Providence* §325, *Heaven and Hell* §318–319). In a beautiful passage, Swedenborg interpreted the line from Exodus 20:24, “In every place I shall put the memorial of My name.” The memorial of my name is placed when a human being acts charitably toward others. This is the name-nature of the One being commemorated. In another passage, Swedenborg again affirmed the necessity and beauty of great differences and variety:

It is much the same with the spiritual things of the church; here the opposites refer to evil and falsity. Yet these do not come from the Lord, but from human beings, who have free will and can apply it to good or to evil purposes. To use a comparison, it is the same as with darkness and cold. These do not come from the sun, but from the earth, which as it revolves successively withdraws from and turns away from the sun. Yet were it not for this turning towards and withdrawal, there would be neither days nor years, and so nothing, indeed, no one, upon earth.

*True Christian Religion* §763

Then, to emphasize this acceptance of variety in religious matters, Swedenborg casually referred to something he heard angels say in heaven:

I have been told that churches which possess differing kinds of good and truth, so long as the kinds of good they have relate to love to the Lord and the truths they have relate to faith in the Lord, are like so many jewels in a king’s crown.

*True Christian Religion* §763

Swedenborg was speaking of the heart of religion that transcends the boundaries of creeds, nations, cultures, times, people. All who act in the good that they know will be saved. I believe this action is not a simple

matter of following a set of rules. The good we know is larger than ourselves. It involves a searching, trying. Good is part of life itself, like trying to find and act on its highest capacities, life discovering itself.

Swedenborg had more followers in the 1800s than he has now. Some of these followers felt they should act to give this Church of the New Jerusalem a home, an institution in which it could be realized here on earth. (In part, this resulted from the rejection of Swedenborg by the established churches.) This became a small Protestant sect that, in time, proceeded to split into liberal and conservative factions. Now the several branches of the churches of the New Jerusalem range from those who see Swedenborg as simply a gifted man to those who see his word almost as sacred as the Word of God. Often these groups refers to themselves as Swedenborgian. Swedenborg clearly would have been opposed to attaching his name to any church. In relation to churches, he was just another servant of the Lord. His name didn't matter.

I respectfully differ with the followers of Swedenborg who established churches of the New Jerusalem. Though it is perfectly appropriate for people of like mind to join together under any name, I believe that, in this instance, many of them tended to miss the great universality of what Swedenborg was pointing to. Often Swedenborgians wonder why their most favored, greatest of all dispensations resulted in several poor tiny churches. Perhaps they are being tested? Perhaps its day to sweep over the whole earth is yet to come?

I belong to the group of scholars who feels that the Church of the New Jerusalem is well established, the largest church of all, the community of all those of different cultures, languages, creeds, and styles of living who act by the good they know. I am in accord with the noted theologian Walter Marshall Horton that Swedenborg's followers' claim to an exclusive esoteric revelation unnecessarily cut him off from the fellowship of other churches.<sup>2</sup> His is not an exclusive revelation, although unique in some ways; Swedenborg talked about the heart of all religions. Others also have illuminated the heart of religions. The Church of the New Jerusalem is founded: it is the communion and fellowship of all those who act from the good that they know. In fact, Horton calls Swedenborg one of the greatest and earliest ecumenicists in an age that had not yet heard the term. The real Church of the New Jerusalem could find Swedenborg illuminating any religious tradition, including primitive ones. It is important to understand

this. By focusing on humankind, the essentials of the human, Swedenborg transcended any particular culture or time. Although he was very much a Western man who thought in terms of the Christian tradition, he broke through to the universal. Hence, people like Daisetz Suzuki (a Zen Buddhist) and Gopaul Chetty (a Hindu) could become followers of Swedenborg and yet remain in their own faiths.<sup>3</sup>

It is difficult for some to understand truly the universality of what Swedenborg points to. They feel safest and most comfortable in a set of specific doctrines and ceremonies. This is right for them. But they easily lapse from this to the implication that “their way is the one right way.” Look at the great diversity of faces, ages, skin colors, clothes, styles of living. Thus, while we like to latch onto the “one right way,” nature herself is diverse. If nothing else, we need many churches, many doctrines, many traditions to accommodate the diversity of humanity. In dealing with the essentials of good of the life of humankind, Swedenborg looked beyond the masks of diversity to the One Life. There is no problem in the distinct and great diversities of societies in heaven coordinating as the one life of the Grand Man, the image of the Very Human Lord. Diversity-Oneness. As the Zen koan goes, “What is it, that, forever changing, remains exactly the same?” Forever changing are the many churches, but doctrines remain the same, the One Life they speak of.

Others have asked whether Swedenborg would support the idea of reincarnation, which is prominent in some Eastern religions. The idea itself is often misunderstood. In the Hindu tradition, it isn’t the personal, little “I” that is reincarnated, but the general tendencies or the primal monad, of which I am the current edition, that reincarnates. Or another way of saying it is that it is something closer to the Divine than to me that reincarnates. Well, of course, the Lord reincarnates through the whole of existence, since he is the One Life that is the source of all lives. I believe the personal experience of reincarnation is a step on the way to the larger identity. The social usefulness of the idea lies in the implication that I could be in this or that kind of life, which again is a step on the way to seeing the One Life. It is in the direction of love, empathy, understanding, respect for others. Yet, regarding the personal identity, Swedenborg clearly stressed the uniqueness of each one. I am these basic tendencies and qualities, and I will be through the whole of creation. So I’d be inclined to say that outwardly Swedenborg did not support reincarnation, but as inwardly understood, he did. Both are

true. Outwardly, I am this unique person, but my real nature drifts toward the One Life that reincarnates through the whole of time. The advantage of the stress on the uniqueness of the person is that it says, here, in the very qualities that I am, is the Divine. It stresses the obligation to find the way through the immediate consciousness of being. But, as indicated above, there are also truth and usefulness in the idea of reincarnation. I would not wish to denigrate another doctrine that contains real truth and usefulness.

After so much praise and support of Swedenborg, I would like to ask if he was ever clearly wrong in his spiritual works. The answer is probably a tentative “yes.” His most misleading work is *Earths in the Universe*, in which he presented the reports of spirits who claimed to be humans from planets in our solar system, including our own moon. These are probably what Swedenborg calls “enthusiastic” spirits. They report in a convincing manner whatever one wants to hear. Swedenborg must have heard that there was at least little atmosphere on the moon, so these moon spirits have an odd way of speaking that conserves air. He could not have known what is now known of our moon. For there to be humanlike life on our moon is at least extremely unlikely, if not impossible. Swedenborg appeared to believe the reports of spirits from our moon, Mercury, Mars, Jupiter, and the other planets. Because he could not have known better, he appeared to have been taken in by some enthusiastic spirits. As one Swedenborgian exclaimed, “Thank heavens he was at least wrong in one thing!” His whole system is not to be taken on his authority. He derived it from experience, and we are to check it by our own lives. This flaw in his reporting reminds us that we are each on our own, to find our own way.

But when we look closer at the odd matter of moon spirits, there is a strange note of the real in the midst of it. When Swedenborg relates the moon spirits to the zyphoid cartilage in the Grand Man, we suddenly realize our guide is referring to something subjective that we don’t really understand (*Earths in the Universe* §111). The rib signifies the *proprium*, or ego (*Arcana Coelestia* §§138, 147). The real spirit of these moon spirits is the coming together or forefront of egotism. If these spirits are really some kind of spiritual tomfoolery, it is curious that they relate to the area of the Grand Man that reflects egotism, from which we might expect pretentious reporting. Even when misled, Swedenborg was reporting from some subjective realm that has its own strange truths.

In a similar way, I would reserve judgment when Swedenborg reported a low status for certain groups in the spiritual world (for example, Muslims, certain Roman Catholics, the Dutch people, etc.). It would be very difficult, for instance, to be a follower of Mohammed and appreciate Swedenborg. Repeatedly Muslims appear in low status until they drift in an essentially Christian direction in the spiritual worlds. This same kind of negative note appears in relation to several others groups. In any event, I think this a diplomatic error because it makes it difficult for whole groups to appreciate Swedenborg. If one assembled all his references to Muslims, for instance, a more subtle picture would emerge in which he was talking about a type of spiritual error, but the error does not apply to all members of the group. There is always the saving grace of those who act charitably out of the good they know, regardless of the group they are from. For those who are members of a group that Swedenborg found in low spiritual status, I would say that, even in looking at his work, it would be well if we could be charitable, reserve judgment, and be guided by the good we see reflected.

It is often asked whether others can go the same route and follow Swedenborg. The answer is not simple:

Upon being asked several times why no one besides himself enjoyed such revelations and intercourse with spirits, he answered that every person might enjoy it now as in the times of the Old Testament, but the real hindrance is that men at the present time are so carnally minded.

Docs II, 559

Looking back, Swedenborg saw that his whole life was designed for this work. The hard facts of rocks, engineering, astronomy, and anatomy were his training ground. He was trained to observe and report factually. This he did through all the worlds. His style was relatively dry and academic, except in certain of his religious works where his words burn with life. And, of course, no one opens up the life of God except as God permits. The personal quality of Swedenborg's whole life was a real key to what was given to him to see and experience. Also, in reviewing the path he followed, Swedenborg reported it as quite dangerous. Unleashing the inner springs of mind is no minor matter. The main purport of Swedenborg's work is that others could do as much and some would do more, but it was a journey he didn't recommend to anyone. Madness could lie that way, depending upon the quality of the person's inner life.



It is clear that Swedenborg would recommend to other seekers that they live by the good they know and seek in the revealed Word for anything they want. He found so much in the Word that this is no minor recommendation. He would also hope some would find use in his writings. Most of his later life was spent in making his findings available inexpensively to others. For this reason, I support the work of the Swedenborgian publishing societies. Those who put Swedenborg's own works on a pedestal should know that it wasn't his own tendency. He was a servant helping the understanding of the great work, the Word of God. If I could now ask Swedenborg one question, it would be this: Are there other authoritative Words of God than the Christian Bible? Just as the New Jerusalem is everywhere, I believe the Word of God is also, for, after all, it is our very lives, which are here, handy, to be read. This is the Word of God written on the heart.

Clearly, Swedenborg would encourage the search. Act by the good that you know. Ask and more will be given. And insofar as the search is full-bodied, strong, and persistent, it is a good given by the Lord. For it is the Lord who searches through the clouds of our misunderstandings. The Second Coming is eminently possible. And having come, the feeling is, "Oh yes!," "Of course!," "How could it be forgotten?"

All the other worlds are present in the root nature of humanness. In this full sense, we participate in and issue forth from all there is. We are the presence of all the worlds. And all the worlds, and worlds of worlds, are aspects of the One. And this One is always present as life itself, the Essential Person.

## *Afterword*

### **A TRIBUTE TO WILSON VAN DUSEN**

Someone in the nineteenth century, in commenting on the energetic Swedenborgian presses, quipped that Swedenborgians believed in salvation by publication. Although I won't go so far as to say "guilty as charged," it is safe to say that Swedenborgians probably score near the top in ratio of members to publications. So there is little wonder that we celebrate the best-selling author on Emanuel Swedenborg.

I have been involved as an editor and as a managing director in publishing endeavors related to Swedenborg for nearly twenty years; and during this time, I have worked directly with Wilson Van Dusen—or "Van" as he is known—on a couple of significant projects and in a more indirect way on a number of other Van Dusen publications. For the record, Van has published eleven books and approximately 375 articles. Although he has published a number of articles in professional journals and chapters in anthologies in the academic literature of psychology, the great vein of Van's popularity began when he brought together his interests in religion, primarily Eastern at that time, and his work with the Human Potential Movement. The first result was his work *The Natural Depth in Man*, published by Harper and Row in 1972, which found a ready audience for Van's ability as a guide into one's own inner life. Carl Rogers called his discussion of meditation the best he had ever read. Van's skill in working with dreams is legendary among Swedenborgians; and, of course, he is rather famed in Swedenborgian circles for his commentary on Swedenborg's dream journal. As a phenomenologist and a gifted writer, he helped readers of *The Natural Depth in Man* simply, with the tool of observing oneself, of listening to one's life, and of noticing what *is*.

Although Van had to that point been primarily Buddhist and Hindu in his own religious orientation, he followed that book with another Harper and Row title in a work describing a Christian figure whom he had found particularly useful not only in working with exceptional mental states in his professional practice, but in opening up and deepening his personal inner life as well. That 1974 release was called *The Presence of Other Worlds: The Psycho-Spiritual Findings of Emanuel Swedenborg*, a classic and the best-selling book of all time on Emanuel Swedenborg.

Articles continued to flow from his pen, but Van did not publish another significant book-length project for twenty years after that. His articles and short works, by the way, are a critical part of the body of his work. His short work on usefulness is far and away the most widely read, known, and beloved pamphlet-length item in Swedenborgiana. Anyone doing serious work in the future on Wilson Van Dusen will need to explore those 375 articles because they range into all manner of particular subjects that his books do not touch. They frequently engage specific questions of the church's appropriation of Swedenborg's writings, as well as a number of reflections and meditations on specific ideas in Swedenborg's theological and scientific works.

Starting in the mid-1990s, Van returned to book-length treatments and has published close to a work a year since 1995. As his work on "going inward" was well established, Van's later body has been more theological and specifically teleological: that is, the science side of his mind has grown into an ever-deeper appreciation of the design of God's creation and the life God gives to us. And his ever-abiding theme of interfaith oneness has been raised with new vigor. The titles of his books give an indication: *Returning to the Source*; *The Design of Existence*; *Beauty, Wonder, and the Mystical Mind*; and *Just beyond the Physical World*. He is currently at work on two new books.

I'd like to highlight two points about the way in which Wilson Van Dusen has approached and appropriated the Swedenborg heritage. I feel that these are foundational for both the popularity and reception of his works and for their significance in the higher study of religion and spirituality.

First, although Van is not unique in this regard, he has been uniquely successful in getting Swedenborgians to value the reality of the inner life as authoritative over and against biblio-idolatry. The history of Christianity until recently was a "top-down" business. Truth systems were canonized

and polished and given to the people; one was supposed to fit one's inner life into that framework. Theology, with little exception until the mid-twentieth century, worked from theological principles that were correlated into the behavioral codes of the follower.

Then there was the "turn to subject" movement, a European and North American interest focusing on human psychology, on what people actually experience. This interest in *actual experience* is not merely an interest of academia, but—at least, in the United States—has captured the interest of two generations of seekers. Van Dusen has helped pioneer the way for our tradition, which historically has been exceedingly conceptual, to value and seek skills in basic inner spirituality, in talking the language of spiritual experience.

Second, Wilson Van Dusen almost single-handedly helped the Swedenborgian church get over its problem with the word *mysticism*. The longstanding distinction Swedenborgians have wanted to make between classic mysticism and Swedenborg's experience has its merits; but, in the contemporary world of seekers, Christian mysticism has become one of the most important large frameworks for engaging the spiritual life. Swedenborg needs to be available in that discussion, and his writings have been brought more fully into that discussion over the past decade as we have learned to use the term appropriately.

On the thirtieth anniversary of its release, *The Presence of Other Worlds* reads as freshly as ever. It has attained the status of a classic not only because it once opened a new viewpoint upon Swedenborg's experience, but because it continues to articulate a spirituality that speaks to contemporary seekers. Whether as a psychological biography of Swedenborg, as a metaphysical discussion of the spiritual dimension of life, or as a personal spiritual-growth primer, Van Dusen's work presents his insights clearly, lucidly, brilliantly.

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6. See, for example, Harry W. Barnitz, *Existentialism and the New Christianity* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1969).

7. One unusual book, which deals with spirits from other planets that he encountered in heaven, is entitled *Earths in the Universe* in Emanuel Swedenborg, *Miscellaneous Theological Works*, trans. John Whitehead, The Redesigned Standard Edition of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg (West Chester, Pa.: The Swedenborg Foundation, 1996). A new translation of this work, entitled *Other*

*Planets*, is scheduled to be published as part of the NEW CENTURY EDITION OF THE WORKS OF EMANUEL SWEDENBORG.

8. Emanuel Swedenborg, *The True Christian Religion*, 2 vols., trans. John Chadwick (London: Swedenborg Society, 1988). All further quotations from this work will be cited in the text. A new translation of this work, entitled *True Christianity*, is scheduled to be published in 2005, as part of the New Century Edition of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg.

9. For a more thorough explanation of this, see my book *The Natural Depth in Man*.

## 5. The Gentle Root of Existence

1. Emanuel Swedenborg, *Divine Love and Wisdom*, trans. George F. Dole, The New Century Edition of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg (West Chester, Pa.: The Swedenborg Foundation, 2003). All further quotations from this work are taken from this edition and will be cited within the text.

2. Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Heavenly City: A Spiritual Guidebook*, trans. Lee Woofenden (West Chester, Pa.: The Swedenborg Foundation, 1993). All further quotations from this work are taken from this edition and will be cited within the text, under the title *Heavenly Doctrine* since this book is more commonly entitled *The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine*.

3. Emanuel Swedenborg, *Love in Marriage*, trans. David F. Gladish (New York: The Swedenborg Foundation, 1992). All further quotations from this work are taken from this edition and will be cited within the text, under the title *Marriage Love*. This work is also variously called *Conjugal Love* and *Marital Love*. A new translation of this work, entitled *Marriage Love*, is scheduled to be published in 2006.

4. Eldred E. Iungerich, *Soul and Its Representations* (Edinburgh: Turnbull and Spears, 1936).

5. Lao-Tzu, *Tao Te Ching* (London: John Murray, 1950). There are many translations of this little, profound, Chinese work.

6. For more on this aspect, see Van Dusen, *Natural Depth in Man*.

7. See, for example, William Healy, Augusta Bronner, and Anna Bowers, *The Structure and Meaning of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Knopf, 1931).

## 6. The Presence of Spirits in Madness

1. This chapter is an adaptation of an article, "The Presence of Spirits in Madness," in the *New Philosophy* 70 (1967):461–477; in a Swedenborg foundation pamphlet of the same name, 1968; and as "Hallucinations as the World of Spirits," *Psychedelic Review* 11 (1971):59–70. My findings on hallucinations are described in greater detail in Chapter 10 of *The Natural Depth in Man*, but without the comparison to Swedenborg.

## 7. Minor Miracles

1. All the incidents cited in this chapter are described in greater detail in R. L. Tafel, *Documents Concerning the Life and Character of Emanuel Swedenborg*, cited above. These volumes are now scarce. They cite every known source for the incidents and even make detailed comparisons where several accounts variously describe one incident. I've omitted the tedious scholarship and taken the most likely account where observers differed.

## 8. Existence Itself as Symbolic

1. Carl Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, vol. 12 in *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).
2. Molly Harrower, *Appraising Personality: An Introduction to the Projective Techniques* (New York: F. Watts, 1964).
3. Flanders Dunbar, *Emotions and Bodily Changes* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947).
4. John Worcester, *Physiological Correspondences* (Boston: New Church Union, 1889).
5. C. Fisher and W.C. Dement, "Studies on the Psychopathology of Sleep and Dreams," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 119 (1963): 1160–1168.

## 9. Inner Meanings

1. Walter Marshall Horton, *Emanuel Swedenborg, His Significance for Contemporary Theology* (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1965), 9–16.
2. Emanuel Swedenborg, *The White Horse*, trans. John Whitehead, Redesigned Standard Edition of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg (West Chester, Pa.: The Swedenborg Foundation, 1996). A new translation of this work is scheduled for the New Century Edition of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg.
3. Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Doctrine of Holy Scripture* in *The Four Doctrines*, trans. by John Faulkner Potts, The Redesigned Standard Edition of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg (West Chester, Pa.: The Swedenborg Foundation, 1997). All further quotations from this work are taken from this edition and will be cited within the text. A new translation of this work, to be entitled *Sacred Scripture*, is scheduled for the NEW CENTURY EDITION OF THE WORKS OF EMANUEL SWEDENBORG.
4. Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Doctrine of Life*, in *The Four Doctrines*, trans. by John Faulkner Potts, The Redesigned Standard Edition of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg (West Chester, Pa.: The Swedenborg Foundation, 1977). A new translation of this work, to be entitled *Life*, is scheduled for the New Century Edition of the Works of Emanuel Swedenborg.
5. George M. Alexander, *The Handbook of Biblical Personalities* (Greenwich, Conn.: Seabury Press, 1962), 212.

## 10. The One Present

1. D. T. Suzuki, *Swedenborg: Buddha of the North*, trans. Andrew Bernstein (West Chester, Pa.: The Swedenborg Foundation, 1996).
2. William Marshall Horton, *Emanuel Swedenborg: His Vision of a United Christianity* (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1965), 39–51.
3. I have referred to Suzuki's work previously. See also D. Gopaul Chetty, *New Light upon Indian Philosophy or Swedenborg and Saiva Siddhanta* (London: J. M. Dent, 1923).



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